



**SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY  
FOR ALL BY 2020**  
September 4–6, 2001 ! Bonn, Germany



**SUMMARY NOTE**

**Speaker:** Per Pinstrup-Andersen, Director General, International Food Policy Research Institute

**Title:** Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. President, Madam Minister, Lady Mayor, Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure to join the previous speakers in welcoming you to this IFPRI Conference on "Sustainable Food Security for All by 2020." I am delighted that so many have accepted our invitation. I am particularly happy that we have in this room, dedicated individuals from so many stakeholder groups — including government; civil society, including NGOs; the private sector, including farmers; international organizations; the science community; and others dedicated to help create an environment in which people can escape food insecurity and malnutrition in a manner compatible with sustainable management of natural resources. Imagine what we can do together if we make sustainable food security for all our top priority and pull in the same direction. We can make a difference in the lives of millions.

Much progress has been made during the last 30 years but much more needs to be done. In the face of rapid economic growth in many developing countries, per capita incomes of one-third of all developing countries are lower today than 20 years ago and life expectancy is lower today than 20 years ago in one-fourth of the developing countries.

Millions of children die every year from nutrition-related illnesses and many more millions do not develop to their full potential because they are malnourished. About 800 million people are food insecure, meaning that they either starve or they do not know from where their next meal will come. Much of the progress on food security has occurred at the expense of our environment. With business as usual, IFPRI projects that the nutritional improvements during the next 20 years will be less than the improvements made during the last 20 years and environmental degradation will continue.

In a world as rich as ours, such a situation is a disgrace, it is ethically and morally wrong, and it is bad economics. Eliminating the associated human misery and wastes in a sustainable manner would benefit us all. And we owe it to our fellow men and women and to future generations.

Solutions to the food and nutrition problems need to be designed and implemented within a new and rapidly changing environment. Globalization and sweeping technological changes offer new opportunities for solving these problems. But changes in policies and institutions are needed to turn these opportunities into benefits for the poor and malnourished. Without a new policy agenda, globalization and new technology may bypass the poor or actually do them harm.

A number of other driving forces or trends must be taken into account in developing appropriate action. If recent trends continue, water scarcity will become the biggest barrier to achieving sustainable food security in an increasing number of areas. Soil degradation is widespread and yields are negatively affected in many localities because farmers are removing more nutrients than they are putting back into the soil. Climate change is posing new problems for agricultural researchers and farmers. Emerging and re-emerging health problems (such as HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria) are not

only killing more people and creating more human misery, they make it virtually impossible for millions of people to escape poverty and food insecurity. Rapid urbanization in developing countries is gradually moving people and poverty from rural to urban areas.

Some of the action needed, such as primary health care and appropriate technology for small farms, is not new but it must be cast in the new and changing global and national environment, taking into account new opportunities and risks. Promotion of pro-poor growth, empowerment of the poor, and effective provision of public goods, are the backbones of a successful approach to achieving sustainable food security for all. I hope that by providing a forum for knowledge exchange, this conference will help identify the action to be taken.

But who is responsible for taking action? Dramatic changes in the roles of national governments, civil society, the private sector, and international institutions are creating confusion about who is responsible. Some use these changes as an excuse for not taking action. Hopefully, this conference will help to reduce the confusion, eliminate the excuse, and break the complacency.

Constructive dialogue across and within the various interest and stakeholder groups, including the intended beneficiaries, is critical to arrive at the best solutions. We must turn shouting into constructive dialogue and dialogue into action.

In conclusion, even if those responsible give high priority to achieving sustainable food security for all and back it up with action, the world may not achieve the goal by 2020. But we will be much closer than with business as usual. I urge all of us to provide the strongest support for the World Food Summit goal of reducing food insecurity and malnutrition by half by 2015. The progress by most countries during the five years since the Summit has been mediocre. We must support FAO's efforts to once again draw attention to this goal at the conference on "The World Food Summit, five years later", scheduled for November of this year.

Unless the solution of food and nutrition problems are given a much higher priority by governments everywhere, the human misery and economic waste embodied in food insecurity and malnutrition will continue at high levels. How do we explain that to the millions of mothers and fathers who are fighting to give themselves and their children a future?