

FSN FORUM - DISCUSSION TOPIC NO. 1, 2009

**LOOKING AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY WHILE ADDRESSING
FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION ISSUES**
FROM 2ND FEBRUARY TO 27TH FEBRUARY

Dear all,

My name is Andrew MacMillan. I am an agricultural economist, specialized in tropical agriculture. I retired from FAO at the end of 2005, after 35 years in the Organization. My final job in FAO was to serve as Director of the Field Operations Division, which included the Service responsible for the management of the Special Programme for Food Security.

I have noted that one of the most exciting things about the new **Obama administration** is that **it looks at so many issues from an entirely different perspective.**

Thus, instead of seeing funding of programmes to make America greener as an unaffordable fiscal burden, and worrying about their negative impact on the country's industrial output and its competitiveness, they recognize that they present a great opportunity for viable investment, for creating extra employment and for reducing dependence on external sources of energy - as well as, of course, cutting noxious emissions and curbing the country's impact on the extent and rate of climate change.

I gather that they have also recognised that, in seeking to fight the recession by stimulating consumer spending, transfers to the poor (e.g. food stamps) will have a much more immediate effect on the demand for goods than tax cuts for the rich (who may simply save rather than spend the money). At the same time these transfers reduce the extent of hardship suffered by the poor, that tends to grow during economic down-turn, and hopefully improve their health and potential productivity.

They have, therefore, **identified "win-win" opportunities** for inclusion in their economic stimulus package.

Many of us are concerned that the global financial crisis and recession will be used as an excuse for governments to back out of the commitments that they have been making to improve food security through supporting agricultural expansion and the creation of social protection programmes, as set out in the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA), prepared by the High Level Task Force. Perhaps we should take a leaf out of the Obama book, and **demonstrate**, as I know we can, that **there are many opportunities for viable investment in agricultural expansion** - and that it makes sense to include **social protection programmes as central elements in any stimulus package** in countries trying to kick-start their way out of recession.

Indeed, one of the attractions of the twin-track approach to improving food and nutrition security, advocated by FAO, is that, by translating the food needs of the poor into demand, it stimulates markets for farm products. **Should we not be making more of this potential "win-win" opportunity** - which also improves people's health, lets them live life to the full and respects human rights?

We have got to build a **strong constituency of public support** for the **eradication of hunger and malnutrition**, just as the Obama administration is doing in the US. As part of this process, it would be great if **FSN members were to share their practical experiences of "win-win" opportunities that would help to convince a skeptical world that getting rid of hunger and malnutrition is not charity but is in everyone's interest.**

Andrew

MODERATOR NOTE

"Twin Track" approach to hunger reduction advocated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN

The twin-track approach combines the promotion of quick-response agricultural growth, led by small farmers, with targeted programmes to ensure that hungry people who have neither the capacity to produce their own food nor the means to buy it can have access to adequate supplies. The two tracks are mutually reinforcing, since programmes to enhance direct and immediate access to food offer new outlets for expanded production. Countries that have followed this approach are seeing the benefits.

For more information, please check: the paper:

ANTI-HUNGER PROGRAMME, A twin-track approach to hunger reduction: priorities for national and international action

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Rome, November 2003

http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn-viewresdet/en/?no_cache=1&r=679&nocache=1