

More and Better

1. More and Better is a valuable initiative. It brings together many organizations which can help to build public support and commitment to end hunger and poverty. More and Better provides a needed voice from the NGO sector.
2. The approaches to small-scale farm development – the common principles – fit closely with mainstream thinking in FAO and are consistent with those being applied in the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS), especially in the type of advice being given to countries engaged in the design of national food security programmes.
3. Whether the proposal is sufficiently convincing to serve as the basis for a really effective campaign which will result in more and better aid for hunger reduction might be questioned. My own view is that, if it is to gain widespread attention and support it may need to focus much more explicitly on hunger eradication and attaining human rights, the most basic of which, as noted by the Minister of Agriculture for Norway, is the right to food.
4. The paper makes a good case for support for the sustainable development of small-scale farming, using participative methods. It would be all the more convincing if it documented cases in which the principles had been successfully applied. It also, needs, I believe, to say why it is so important to reduce hunger and how programmes targeted on small-scale farmers fit within the broader set of measures required for rapid hunger reduction.
5. Over the past year or so, we have found a surge of interest among developing countries in ending hunger, and, of the 105 countries in which the SPFS is operating, some 40 seem to be seriously committed to meet their World Food Summit (WFS) goal. They are going for large-scale programmes which take the WFS target or the first Millennium Development Goal as their objective. If even only half of these succeed, this will have a major impact on global hunger levels.
6. Many other developing countries and donors (including, I am sorry to say, IFAD) are still not convinced of the need for deliberate measures to cut hunger. There is still a widespread perception that hunger will disappear as a result of poverty reduction.
7. This, of course, is wishful thinking. In countries – other than those fortunate to have mineral wealth and which are not squandering this – there is no way in which the high rates of economic growth required to reduce poverty can be attained when 10, 20 or 30% of the population are excluded from meaningful participation in the economy because they are chronically hungry.
8. Even if a country attains high rates of economic growth and reduces the incidence of poverty, this does not automatically translate into reduced hunger. David Beckman told us on Saturday that there are 38 million Americans living with not enough to eat. President Lula launched Fome Zero because there are 40 million Brazilians living in hunger in a land of plenty.
9. What this means is that if a country is serious about its WFS target or the hunger dimension of MDG1, it has to take deliberate and purposive steps cut chronic undernourishment and malnutrition. Otherwise it will improve the hunger statistics simply because many of their people are dying young.
10. We have convinced ourselves in FAO that fast progress in hunger reduction needs to focus not only on small-scale farm development but also on simultaneously improving access to food for people who are unable to produce or buy their needs – implying a need for school feeding programmes and income transfers. These programmes can

translate needs into demand and hence create new income opportunities for small producers and traders.

11. We are also learning that the tactics used in small-scale farm development have an important bearing on the extent to which agricultural and rural development programmes impact on food security. What we need to do is not go for high performance gains by a relatively few farmers – usually the élite amongst the poor who enjoy access to good support services and face low transaction costs in marketing who tend to be the preferred beneficiaries of donor-funded projects - but for moderate improvements by very large numbers of the poorest and most vulnerable rural households, having these reflected in the first instance in improved family food consumption, especially at times of year when shortage of human energy is the principle factor limiting small-scale farm output. While not denying the benefits of market integration, we need to encourage improved self-provisioning (especially of nutritious products – vegetables, poultry, fish) where this offers the best immediate prospect for improving food security.
12. Adoption of these tactics makes it possible to move very fast on hunger reduction because it implies only very limited demands on highly qualified extensionists, input supplies, credit and marketing systems. We have found – as Mercy knows from her experience in Kenya with Farmers’ Field Schools - that farmers, living in the communities, can be trained to lead the adjustment process by building capacity at community level to identify the underlying causes of food insecurity and to define and adopt their own locally specific solutions – solutions which may not relate simply to technology changes but also to better access of the poor to natural resources, disease prevention and nutrition education. While most public sector extension services face huge staffing and funding constraints and high costs because of their dependence on expensive transport, farmer-facilitated training systems can expand very rapidly at an affordable cost.
13. Finally, let me say how much we in FAO value – and need – the creativity and energy that you and other NGOs are putting into campaigning and signalling the way towards a better world.