

STATEMENT BY MR. D. RAJA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON A GENDA ITEM 26 –
AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY – AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE
OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER
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Mr. Chairperson,

This august gathering is deliberating on one of the most pressing issues of the present time. Ensuring food security especially for the poor and the marginalised is a challenge that preoccupies Governments in developing countries first and foremost.



Our collective aspiration to attain the MDGs especially removal of hunger and reduction of poverty by the target year of 2015 is critically dependent on the issue of food security being addressed in its entire dimension.

The food crisis of 2008 exposed the global imbalance that had crept into the management of agriculture and food production worldwide and the inherent limitations of unsustainable farming and market practices to deal with food as a basic human need.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite the recent fall in world prices, domestic food prices and price volatility remain high. This directly impacts the day to day survival of more than a billion poor people in developing countries.

Unsustainable agricultural practices, emphasis on producing non-food crops, consistent spells of drought, environmental degradation, impact of climate change and stagnant agricultural productivity, due to lack of investment and modern inputs, has led to a mismatch between global food demand and supply. Inadequate storage facilities in developing countries including India for food grains leads to wastage and rotting which needs to be tackled

Some 29 countries, mostly LDCs, are in permanent state of food insecurity. Unavailability of food has led to increase in hunger, malnutrition and poverty in several parts of the world.

Mr. Chairperson,

Agriculture development is a livelihood issue for majority of the population in developing countries. In India, around 70% of our population is dependent on agriculture. Two-third of our agriculture is rain-fed which is totally dependent on the vagaries of nature

The Government of India has undertaken several measures to tackle food security and agriculture development in an integrated manner. Our national policy for farmers, addresses the issue of improving the economic viability of farming, through substantially improving net income of farmers; promoting sustainable use of natural resources like soil, water, biodiversity; empowering small and marginal farmers; appropriate price and trade policy mechanisms.

However, ensuring food and nutritional security for all, while combating hunger and poverty and remunerative agriculture for our farming community, poses a major challenge to us. India is considering enacting a food security legislation. In the meantime, the Public Distribution System, even though not a universal one is maintained to provide essential commodities which include food grains to the poor

India has launched a National Food Security Mission for enhancing production of rice, wheat and pulses by 20 million tonnes by 2012. Efforts are being made to help

the small and marginal farmers from the vagaries of the market by way of price support system.

India has taken a few steps for providing crop and cattle insurance. Information on market intelligence and price analyses is also being provided to farmers and other stakeholders using Information and Communications Technologies.

Mr. Chairperson,

The solution to enhancing global food security lies in global action. No single country can, on its own, handle such complex issues.

Strengthening international cooperation to share best practices on agriculture development, transfer and diffusion of technology, collaboration in science and technology for development of new and improved varieties of crop and close policy coordination at local, regional and global level are a must.

In this regard, India reiterates its support for the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative and calls upon countries to meet their financial commitments to enhance the capabilities of of developing countries to design and implement an effective food security strategy.

I am happy to inform this gathering that the SAARC member countries have decided to establish a SAARC food bank to enhance their collective food security. India would encourage other regional groups to undertake similar initiative.

Our collective effort should be to ensure higher investment in agriculture, greater use of modern technology and access to farm credit to enhance agriculture productivity and growth. Our approach should equally keep in mind the concerns of ecology and environment; empowering small and marginal farmers; and giving special attention to dry land agriculture.

Mr. Chairperson,

The ongoing multilateral trade negotiations, where arguments for liberalising trade in agriculture products are being put forth, must bear in mind the imperative of providing adequate safeguard to agriculture, food security and livelihood of the people in developing countries.

India takes note of the recent initiatives taken by the G-20 under the programme of global agriculture and food security to ensure agricultural development. India hopes that the reactivation of the Food Crisis Response Programme by the World Bank, which has dedicated US\$ 760 million to countries at risk of food price volatility, will yield positive results.

India is aware of the urgent need for agricultural development and ensuring food security for all and is committed to adopt suitable strategies in this regard.

I wish to end my statement by recalling the prophetic words of Mahatma Gandhi, and I quote "there is enough for everybody's need but not for everybody's greed".

I thank you.

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