



Development Briefing no. 30

Resilient Agriculture in the Face of Crises and Shocks

4 March 2013, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC),
Rue Belliard 99-101, 1040 Brussels, room JDE 62, <http://bruxellesbriefings.net>

SPEECH

by Mr. Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

One in six people on our planet face a daily struggle to find enough food to live. **Food insecurity** is thought to affect, in one way or another, more than one third of the population of the ACP countries, mainly in rural areas. This is the reality we need to tackle. And since I am myself a farmer and engaged in farmers' organisations, agricultural resilience is an issue that lies particularly close to my heart.

The European Economic and Social Committee has regularly worked on agricultural and development issues. This has been a major issue also in our bilateral work with civil society organisations from the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. I would especially like to recall the conference on global food security, organised by the Committee in 2011 at the request of France, when it chaired the G-20. The conference resulted with a number of recommendations on how to secure food for the world's ever growing population.

Today's event is about **resilience in agriculture**. Resilience seems to be the new "buzz word" in development policy, and since words actually do count, that is a positive change! In my view, agricultural resilience implies self-sufficiency, and self-sufficiency suggests a degree of autonomy; That is, of course, a worthwhile target to be set.

We at the EESC welcome the **Communication**¹ adopted by the Commission on this matter last October – *The EU approach to resilience: Learning from food security crisis* – which identifies some of the most relevant issues and constitutes an important base for work.

I would like now to draw your attention to some issues, which are relevant in order **to build resilience**:

- One of the main causes of food insecurity today stems from the fact that in the developing world investing in agriculture, and especially in smallholder-based production, has been neglected for decades. We need to **stimulate sustainable investment in agriculture** by enhancing smallholders' access to financial services, including credit and insurance. Development aid cooperation should better take into account agriculture, and funding should be reoriented to strengthen agricultural resilience.
- In order to build resilience, we need to stop reducing natural resources and we need to seriously reduce pollution. Agricultural policies, development aid and investment should **promote environmentally-friendly**.
- We need to **support agricultural policies that promote local and regional markets**. Agricultural policies should boost agricultural production at local level, for example by promoting locally adapted seeds, appropriate fertilisers and small irrigation systems.
- With the assistance of FAO and other international organisations, we need to **improve the existing mapping and information systems for food insecurity**.

¹ *The EU approach to resilience: Learning from food security crises*, Brussels, 3.10.2012 COM(2012) 586 final

- We need to build systems where **governments take actions to protect the most vulnerable from hunger** and ensure that basic needs are fully met in case of an emergency.
- We need to **analyse the need to create regional strategic grain and other staple foodstuff reserves**, supplied from producers in the region concerned, as the ASEAN has done for rice.
- We strongly support the ILO initiatives aimed at the implementation of **a social security floor for the most disadvantaged people**. This should include a set of rights and social transfers and key services.

Fighting food waste and food losses becomes even more important if we bear in mind that hundreds of millions of people must fight every day for their food. With regard to infrastructure, particular attention should be given to **storage capacities** in order to reduce post-harvest losses.

Finally, we must adopt a **bottom-up approach**. We must take into account all the relevant stakeholders. In this regard, I would like to particularly insist on the **role of civil society organisations**, including farmers' organisations and agricultural cooperatives. In order to achieve effective and longstanding improvements we must listen carefully to the people working with these issues at the grassroots level.

Thank you for your attention!