



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 Rajul Pandya-Lorch, Head of the 2020 Vision Initiative, IFPRI

I would like to begin by warmly thanking CTA, and in particular Michael Hailu and Isolina Boto, for inviting IFPRI – the International Food Policy Research Institute – to co-organize this Brussels Policy Briefing on “Agricultural Resilience in the Face of Crises and Shocks”. We at IFPRI are delighted to do so – not only is it a pleasure to collaborate with CTA and to be part of the important policy discourse in Europe with the EC and the ACP, but also because building resilience is emerging as a major food policy challenge and opportunity.

Poor countries and vulnerable people are being hit hard by a barrage of shocks – economic shocks such as volatile food prices, environmental shocks such as droughts and floods, social and political shocks such as conflicts and violence, and so forth. The number and intensity of these shocks are not diminishing over time – on the contrary. Emerging threats and other trends such as climate change are promising more shock events that will trigger more damage, loss of assets, and displacement of people, and aggravate the consequences on already vulnerable communities.

Building resilience means developing strategies that help individuals, households, communities, regions, and countries cope with and recover from shocks and, at a minimum, bounce back to where they were. Such resilience is a critical dimension of development.

We at IFPRI have been working for some time now on building resilience, primarily on strengthening the capacity of the poor to cope with shocks. A key example of our work pertains to improving resilience through innovative safety net programs. Some of our ongoing work in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, DRC, and the Arab World is related to resilience to conflict and weather shocks. We also have work underway on environmental migration, which is another facet of resilience to climate change.

IFPRI plans to scale up work on building resilience. The new IFPRI Strategy for 2013-2018 has identified six strategic research priorities – Building Resilience is one of these six. Our research will focus on, among other things, the potential causes and impacts of shocks, on how to make agriculture more resilient, on how to enhance long-term resilience through social safety nets, on

developing more effective strategies for coping with and insuring against risks, and for improving the functioning of food systems.

It is crucial to build resilience to both sudden shocks and slower-moving stresses and to strengthen ecosystems and social systems to cope with natural disasters and human-induced crises. More resilient ecosystems and social systems cope better with shocks and enable transformations of livelihoods.

I wish us all a very productive and constructive dialogue today on building agricultural resilience to crises and shocks.