



Development Briefing no. 30

Resilient Agriculture in the Face of Crises and Shocks

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SPEECH

by Mr. Denis Salord, Head of Unit, EC/DEVCO E3

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I address you all in connection with this initiative of the CTA, which helps to keep the focus of the international political agenda on the many dimensions of resilience, including food security and agriculture.

Recent and recurrent food crises in the Sahel region and in the Horn of Africa, where more than 30 million suffered from hunger in 2012, have underlined the necessity of working out a systematic long-term approach with a view to increasing the resilience of the populations of these countries. More globally, resilience is a determinant factor for all the countries whose populations depend on basic agricultural products, products subject, as all of us know, to instability of prices at regional and at international levels.

In many parts of the world several factors have increased exposure to risk, in particular to natural and economic risk, that is, climatic change, environmental damage, demographic and energy pressure on land-use and the cross-frontier nature of natural risks and increasingly extreme hydrometeorological events. The consequences of these worldwide trends reveal themselves in the increased number and intensity of natural catastrophes and crises.

The EU is one of the leading donors in the world providing assistance designed to ensure the survival of persons affected by different crises. This aid is indispensable, but it essentially aims to deal with emergency situations and must be completed by support for populations exposed to certain risks to resist, cope with and adapt to repeated undesirable events and long-term crises.

Increasing resilience is therefore a long and exacting task that must be firmly rooted in national policies and planning. It forms part of the process of truly sustainable development that attacks the deep causes of recurrent crises without limiting itself to their consequences¹.

Resilience is a central objective of development aid

Please allow me to dwell on the main message that I wish to get across today: **the European Commission has undertaken to make resilience a central objective of its development aid.** Today's debate therefore strikes us as crucial.

As you know, the European Commission approved a Communication last October with the objective of integrating resilience in its action strategy with the partner countries.

Being resilient means having the capacity to resist, to adapt and to recover from the impact of a crisis or shock. Our objective is therefore to support the most vulnerable, especially those exposed to food crises.

¹COM(2011) 637, as approved by the conclusions of the Council of 14 May 2012.

This opens the door to the second message I would like to communicate today. **Increasing resilience also means reducing vulnerability to food crises.** In this connection, agricultural producers, in particular the small producers living in poor countries, are key players because they make an important contribution, not only as regards food production and, therefore, availability, but also as regards supplying local markets and, therefore, access to food. Furthermore, these small producers are also among the most vulnerable and the most exposed to extreme hydrometeorological phenomena and climates.

Through its various programmes the European Commission has resolved to make resilience a major line of action of the Aid Programmes put in place, for instance in the agricultural sector through its Programmes in support of agricultural chains for basic products and those intended to combat food insecurity.

The resilience of small producers is necessarily a matter of a sustainable agriculture that makes the most of natural resources without exhausting them, and reduces its dependence on non-renewable resources, (energy, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs that will become less and less available in the near future).

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Commission may well be strongly committed to increasing resilience, but the results and impact of this policy will not be felt unless the actions to be taken are taken on the basis of discussion between and involvement of you the beneficiaries and sectoral specialists. Today's meeting is therefore particularly important, as it offers us the occasion to compare notes with you and to learn about different experiences in increasing agricultural resilience, which remains closely bound up with food security.

Thank you.