The world can satisfy its growing appetite for meat and animal-based products without upsetting livelihoods, especially of developing country farmers, or worsening climate change.

This is the thinking behind the new multi-sectoral Global Agenda of Action (GAA) launched by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The initiative being promoted during the FAO’s 38th conference in Rome supports the development of a sustainable livestock sector that provides farmers with income, food and value-added products.

“What is the future of the developing country farmers, especially smallholder farmers?” asks FAO Assistant Director-General Ren Wang.

“In my view and that of FAO, the future is to increase the opportunities for profit, improving productivity and efficiency. We cannot leave smallholder farmers at subsistence level. We have to develop business models, because livestock is a business for livestock farmers.”

Wang tells TerraViva that the GAA will help smallholder farmers to improve the quality, efficiency and competitiveness of their products in the face of concerns about the environmental impacts of providing meat, milk and other animal products.

(more on p. 2)
According to FAO, about one billion people worldwide depend on livestock, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where livestock provides up to 40 percent of agricultural gross domestic product but the sector only gets three percent of international development funding. “Governments should do more to provide services and ensure that these services are enhanced to support livelihoods while ensuring sustainability for both the farmers and the environment,” says Wang. “There is a role for multilateral organisations such as the FAO, which can help in developing and implementing guidelines so that quality standards go up.”

A widely cited FAO study says livestock operations account for 18 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activities. The calculation included the effects of deforestation, food production and its chemical inputs, gases produced by livestock, meat processing and agricultural transport. Scientists estimate that methane has a global warming potential 23 times more potent than that of carbon dioxide and call for better ways of managing livestock production by increasing efficiencies. “The livestock sector is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and by improving efficiency, especially input use efficiency, we can effectively mitigate the effects of the emissions in the livestock sector,” Wang says.

The GAA seeks improvements in natural resource use efficiency. Land, water, nutrients and greenhouse gas emissions are its initial focus. The focus area of restoring value to grasslands pursues better management of grazing land, which contributes to carbon sequestration, protection of water resources and biodiversity, whilst enhancing productivity and livelihoods. The third focus of the GAA is on recovering energy and nutrients from animal manure to protect the environment.

**Budget Is the Missing Piece: FAO Director General**

by Stella Paul

*World food production in developing regions soared by up to 40 percent over the past decade, yet nearly a billion people continued to live with chronic hunger.*

To bridge this gap, there is an urgent need to strengthen the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization’s budget, says FAO Director General José Graziano da Silva, addressing assembled delegates and heads of state at the 38th session of FAO’s biennial conference.

“Now it is time for the next step: approve the Programme of Work and Budget for 2014-2015 and the Medium Term Plan for 2014-2017,” says Da Silva. Twenty years of zero growth to FAO’s budget, he added, have resulted in the organisation’s available funds de facto being worth 27 percent less today.

Da Silva is asking for a one-percent real increase in the agency’s budget, plus less than four percent to cover inflation and mandatory increases of staff costs. Not all member states concur with the request - especially the largest donor countries. But Da Silva expressed hope that during the course of this week, a consensus will be reached, thus enabling the U.N. agency to better fight hunger across the world and help increase countries’ ability to ensure food security.

“We had a good start over the weekend with an inspiring lecture from Professor Amartya Sen and recognising countries that have met hunger targets. I am hopeful that the week ahead will be a constructive one,” the director general said.
Women represent 43 percent of the global agricultural workforce. However, not only are they discriminated against in terms of access to credit and land, but they also are burdened with more house and family-care chores and are more likely to be in precarious and low-paid employment.

During this week's biennial conference in Rome, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) announced the mainstreaming of gender across all its policies and put its gender policy for discussion in front of the national delegations.

Observers of FAO's work on gender argue that it has made very good progress over the past years, and that the basic necessary documents and normative frameworks needed for closing the gender gap are now in place. But care must now be paid to implementation. “Gender mainstreaming is necessary but not a guarantee,” Bérengère Quincy, France’s representative to FAO, tells TerraViva. “The mainstreaming needs to be backed up by better knowledge and expertise and followed up with clear objectives and indicators of progress.”

Granting women equal access to land and resources as men would increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent, which in turn would lead to raising agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to four percent and saving 100 to 150 million people from malnourishment.

The 2010-2011 State of Food and Agriculture report was for the first time focused on women’s role in the global food system. Importantly, it brought quantitative data to support the idea that empowering women contributes significantly to FAO’s mission of defeating hunger, which in turn contributed to gender issues being embraced across FAO departments.

In 2012, the organisation published a Gender Policy, which aims to both prioritise gender issues in FAO’s own structure and programmes and to increase capacities for promoting gender equality in the countries where FAO operates. This year’s conference is expected to endorse a budget for 2014-2015 that would leave the amounts for gender issues unchanged from the previous budget period 2013-2014, that is, 21.8 million dollars. This amount represented a doubling of the 9.8 million dollars corresponding to the 2010-2011 following pressure from gender rights supporters within and outside FAO, and represents a 2.1 percent of the overall net appropriation.

Over the next years, FAO is expected to set a target for gender spending that could even exceed the 2.1 percent. ActionAid International’s Alberta Guerra, whose group has been advocating for a gender policy and gender mainstreaming at FAO for years, says that it is important that the organisation keeps up the momentum of promoting gender equality. “In order to close the gender gap, it is not enough to adopt the gender lens. It is essential that, in addition to that, interventions that target specifically women’s needs are put into place,” Guerra says.

“The policy is very forward looking. It's not just a policy for FAO, but a policy for its members.”

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“The policy is very forward looking. It’s not just a policy for FAO, but a policy for its members, a policy which tries to set objectives and goals that everyone concerned about food and agriculture is trying to achieve,” says Eve Crowley, FAO deputy director for gender, equity and rural development.

“It’s important to build a momentum around these objectives and goals among all stakeholders.”
Desigualdad tenaz en el granero latinoamericano

por Julio Godoy

A juzgar por los reconocimientos que la FAO acaba de entregar a 11 países latinoamericanos y caribeños, es fácil concluir que la región dio un paso de gigante hacia la erradicación del hambre.

Es el rostro benigno de América Latina, junto con el crecimiento económico que experimentan muchos de sus países. Pero una mirada más exhaustiva del panorama alimentario y agrícola revela otra cara, la de la desigualdad, marcada por la creciente influencia del oligopolio agropecuario industrial.

El economista argentino Raúl Benítez, director la oficina de la FAO para América Latina y el Caribe, recuerda que “si bien nuestro continente ha dado pasos enormes contra el hambre, es también el más desigual del mundo”.

“De los casi 900 millones de personas que padecen hambre en el mundo, 50 millones son latinoamericanos o caribeños”, dice Benítez a TerraViva durante la 38a sesión de la conferencia bienal de la FAO.

Y el hambre aparece en lugares como Argentina, cuya población fue durante buena parte del siglo XX una de las mejor alimentadas del mundo. “Hoy día abundan en Argentina niñas y niños que padecen la desnutrición de la soja”, se queja Silvia Ribeiro, directora para América Latina del no gubernamental Grupo de Acción sobre Erosión, Tecnología y Concentración (ETC).

“Desde hace más 20 años, Argentina ha permitido la expansión masiva de la soja, desplazando la ganadería y otros cultivos, y transformando también la dieta cotidiana de la población”, dice Ribeiro.

Hoy día, “los argentinos pobres no beben leche vacuna, si no leche de soja, y no comen más carne, la sustituyen con soja, una dieta monótona que provoca desnutrición”, aseveró.

Según Ribeiro, el reconocimiento de la FAO a países latinoamericanos “se basa en un análisis parcial”, como si “solo viera el producto interno bruto, pero ignorara que la mayor producción es excluyente socialmente y ecológicamente insostenible”, sentencia.

Benítez replica que “la FAO solo puede llamar la atención a tales fenómenos y proponer medidas; los Estados son soberanos y ellos pueden o no adoptar políticas acordes con nuestras propuestas”.

“Estamos conscientes de que el acaparamiento de tierra y los grandes complejos agrícolas pueden provocar exclusión social y ser insostenibles ecológicamente”, abunda Benítez. “Los gobiernos tienen que ponderar los beneficios a corto plazo con los costos a largo plazo, que pueden ser mucho mayores, y decidir en consecuencia”.

Ribeiro llamó también la atención sobre la expansión de la agricultura genéticamente modificada. “El caso más grave es el del maíz mexicano, pues el gobierno ha liberado el cultivo de granos modificados en beneficio de varias compañías, como Monsanto y DuPont Pioneer”, dice la activista.
Feed the Hungry, Save the Planet

by Claudia Ciobanu

An estimated half of fresh produce in Papua New Guinea is lost between harvesting and marketing.

Credits: Catherine Wilson/IPS

Humanity currently requires one and a half planets to support our lifestyles. But do we really need to burn out the earth in order to feed ourselves?

A definitive “no” is the answer of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), which has partnered with the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) to reduce the pollution intensity of food systems, from production to consumption.

Launched in 2010, the agencies’ joint Sustainable Food Systems Programme has no easy mission: with the world population expected to reach nine billion in the next decades and three billion people predicted to join the middle class by 2050, food production is likely to erode even more of the earth’s resources unless radical measures are taken.

With this programme, the two U.N. bodies are embracing a new approach to address all food-related activities in an interconnected, holistic manner.

What does this mean? For example, when trying to assess levels of waste produced by a retail chain, one must take into account not only the food directly thrown away by stores but also the vegetables abandoned in fields in exporting countries because of the high aesthetic standards imposed by the retailer.

At least a third of the food produced today is wasted. The production of this wasted food takes up a quarter of water resources used for agriculture and results in about as much CO₂ emissions as the annual output of the entire United States. This is a sign of system failure, but also an opportunity: cutting waste means both increasing food available for the needy and reducing pollution.

“There is never a choice between agriculture and the environment,” UNEP’s Fanny Demassieux tells TerraViva on the sidelines of the Jun. 15-22 FAO biennial conference.

“Food systems may be something very obvious when you are in FAO or UNEP, but on-the-ground people are wondering how to manage trade-offs between the economy and the environment,” she adds.

The fact that 15 percent of us in the world are still hungry is a collective failure, and this is something we must face up to and this is why it is necessary to try new approaches,” says Demassieux.

The systemic approach was endorsed last year at the Rio+20 conference in Brazil, when all governments committed to a 10-year framework of sustainable production and consumption programmes.

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“But in reality, there is never a choice between agriculture and the environment, because it is ecological foundations that agriculture is built on and depends on,” she adds.

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INterview

A Broader Vision for the MDGs
Stella Paul interviews Nobel Laureate AMARTYA SEN

Q: We are moving towards 2015, when the MDGs expire. What are three things we can do post-2015 to meet unmet needs?

A: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) followed the Millennium Declaration. MDGs are only those things that are measurable in a statistical way, like enrollment in education, literacy and other very quantifiable measures. But the Millennium Declaration also talked about human rights, democracy and many other features of human life, which are not measurable in terms of weights and heights. I think this is a very good moment for the world community and the U.N. to see whether the next 15 years should be based on these quantitative measures.

Q: So how can we perform better?

A: We will have to pay more attention to the scenario that has emerged in some countries. For example, in women’s education, progress has been made across the world on that, but much more needs to be made. I think in some of the places where the healthcare system was a mess, it remains that, and these quantitative measures won’t give you enough idea about how problematic it is for relatively poor people. I wish that the next round should be similarly motivated, similarly concerned, but not confined to only quantitative numbers. So we may have to broaden our vision.

IPSTV Tells the Development Story
by Busani Bafana

The media is a powerful tool in galvanising global attention and action for development issues. IPS television is strategic in telling that story because of the agency’s local presence and credibility, said IPSTV president Omar Peres at the launch of the IPS’s new electronic media venture. Peres was part of a panel discussion on the topic “Millennium Path – Successes and challenges on our way to a zero-hunger world”, which launched the IPSTV Food and Media Talks Monday at the FAO 38th conference. Other panellists included Mario Arvelo, ambassador of the Dominican Republic to the U.N. Rome agencies; ambassador of Mozambique to Italy Carla Elisa Mucavi; Jomo Sundaram, assistant director general, Economic and Social Development, FAO; Antonio Onorati, International Planning Committee for Food Security; and Stella Paul, IPSTV India correspondent. Moderated by IPS Director General Mario Lubetkin, the discussion explored ways in which successful experiences can be used as models for poverty alleviation and poverty reduction. Mucavi says strong leadership and commitment to ending hunger were key to her country’s success. “Strategies and policies were developed to go against the scourge of hunger. The approach for us was bottom up by finding out what challenges farmers faced and the challenges were included in our strategy,” she says.
Q&R: Des émeutes et le riz en Afrique

Busani Bafana interviewe Dr. Marco Wopereis du Centre du riz pour l’Afrique

Le riz est la troisième plus importante source d’énergie alimentaire en Afrique subsaharienne (ASS), selon le Centre du riz pour l’Afrique (ou AfricaRice), une organisation de recherche basée à Cotonou qui travaille sur la réduction de la pauvreté et la sécurité alimentaire en Afrique. Ce centre est soutenu par le Groupe consultatif pour la recherche agricole internationale (GCRAI).

Une analyse récente publiée par Africa-Rice montre que les rendements moyens du riz en Afrique subsaharienne ont augmenté de 30 pourcent de 2007 à 2012 et ils augmentent à un rythme plus rapide que la moyenne mondiale. Le taux de production de la riziculture a également grimpé de 3,2 pourcent un an avant la crise du riz à 8,4 pourcent sur base annuelle pour la suite. Voici quelques extraits de l’interview.

Q: Avec la flambée prévue de la consommation de riz, les politiques actuelles sur l’agriculture en Afrique subsaharienne sont-elles propices à la promotion de la production de riz?

R: Des progrès remarquables ont été réalisés en matière de production de riz. La production de riz se développe maintenant à près de six pourcent par an depuis 2008. Cependant, avec la hausse de la consommation, la production de riz devra doubler son actuel taux de croissance pour satisfaire la demande croissante.

Q: Quelle est la production annuelle de riz en Afrique subsaharienne par rapport à ses importations?

R: Les données 2012 de l’USDA (ministère de l’agriculture des États-Unis) indiquent 12 millions de tonnes de riz produites en Afrique subsaharienne et près de 12 millions de tonnes de riz importées. Ainsi, on peut dire que la production annuelle de riz en 2012 a été équivalente à la quantité importée durant la même année, le tout comptant pour 24 millions de tonnes de riz.

Q: Quel est l’avenir du riz comme aliment de base en Afrique?

R: L’avenir du riz comme aliment de base en Afrique est très prometteur. AfricaRice est convaincu que l’avenir de la riziculture se trouve en Afrique. Le continent a un grand potentiel inexploité qui peut être visible dans ses vastes étendues de terres et ses ressources hydriques faiblement utilisées (par exemple, l’Afrique subsaharienne compte un total de 130 millions d’hectares de terres basses dont seulement 3,9 millions d’hectares sont cultivés).

La compétitivité de la production locale de riz en Afrique subsaharienne est désormais un fait établi. En outre, les rendements sont meilleurs avec un taux de croissance impressionnant supérieur à ceux mesurés pendant la révolution verte en Asie. Différents systèmes d’innovation couplés à la technologie centrée sur le riz ainsi que des programmes politiques environnementaux vont encore renforcer cette croissance et tirer profit du potentiel local.

Suite aux émeutes du riz dans plusieurs villes africaines confrontées à des prix élevés entre 2007 et 2008, l’Afrique subsaharienne est aujourd’hui en croissance et les gens y mangent plus de riz qu’autrefois car les gouvernements ont été contraints de développer de nouveaux programmes ambitieux de production de riz.

TUESDAY, 18 JUNE 2013
Seeds to Beat Drought

by Mantoe Phakathi

The overcast sky is a sign that it might rain, and Happy Shongwe, a smallholder farmer from rural Maphungwane in eastern Swaziland, is not exactly happy.

Inside an unroofed structure made of cement blocks are different types of legumes – peanuts, jugo beans, mung beans, cow peas and ground nuts.

“If I don’t cover the seeds, the rain will spoil them and they will fail the test at the laboratory,” said Shongwe.

The unfinished structure is where she keeps her harvest for drying. An award-winning smallholder farmer who cultivates nothing but legume seeds, Shongwe said the crop is drought tolerant and grows well in the dry parts of the country.

“I always monitor the weather because the little rainfall we get from this part of the country is enough to germinate the seeds,” she said. “You just have to know your weather so that you plant at the right time.”

One of her major clients is the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). FAO buys the seed for demonstration plots to promote conservation agriculture.

“FAO has placed an order of one tonne of ground nuts from this harvest which we are supposed to supply by September,” said Shongwe.

There are about 10 associations of women doing similar work, bringing the number of farmers in this project to over 100, all from the drought-stricken Lubombo Region.

“It used to be very difficult for farmers to come across seed inputs for legumes because these are marginalised crops,” said FAO assistant representative-programmes Khanyisile Mabuza.

Mabuza said FAO asked the Ministry of Agriculture to train women farmers in seed production and entrepreneurship back in the 1990s when the drought started. In 2008, FAO introduced Input Trade Fairs (ITF) where poor farmers received E650 (72 dollars) vouchers from FAO to buy farming inputs.

“Women also form the majority of farmers and it makes sense to ensure that women have enough inputs to do their farming,” said Mabuza.

She also said there was a deliberate effort by FAO to target the dry areas because legumes are so hardy. Maize is the country’s staple food, but it has been failing because of the drought.

“We want our farmers to understand that because of climate change, drought is going to be a part of their lives and they must now learn to adapt,” said Mabuza.