



Pavilion hosting exhibits on sustainable development during Rio+20

RIO+20



By Robynne Anderson, Emerging Ag Inc (robynne@emergingag.com)

You may have seen the media coverage suggesting Rio+20 “just settled” and “showed no ambition”. However, the needs of farmers and the importance of agriculture are well reflected in the final outcomes.

A two year process agreed UN text on trade and food price volatility within the food security section, plus a brief additional section specifically calling for greater trade liberalisation and conclusion of the Doha round.

Having represented the World Farmers’ Organisation through the negotiating process, it was a pleasure to see strong emphasis in the agriculture section on issues that can help farmers address food security and hunger. These include:

- Reaffirmation of the commitment to present and future generations to enhance access to adequate, safe and nutritious food
- Increasing access to credit and other financial services, markets and secure land tenure
- Focusing investment on sustainable agriculture practices, rural infrastructure, storage capacities and related technologies, cooperatives and value chains
- Enhancing agricultural research extension services and training to improving agricultural productivity and sustainability
- Empowering farmers, fishers and foresters to choose among diverse methods of achieving sustainable agricultural production
- Significantly reducing post-harvest and other food losses and waste throughout the food supply chain
- Enhancing resilience to climate change and natural disasters

For agriculture, Rio+20 culminated in the launch of the UN Secretary General’s new Zero Hunger Challenge which caps a long effort to get a focus on food and nutritional security. Ban Ki Moon said: *“Zero hunger would boost economic growth, reduce poverty and safeguard the environment. It would foster peace and stability.”*

The Zero Hunger Challenge has five main objectives: to achieve 100 per cent access to adequate food all year round; to end malnutrition in pregnancy and early childhood; to make all food systems sustainable; to increase growth in the productivity and income of smallholders, particularly women; and to achieve a zero rate of food waste. Agriculture is unmistakably back at the top of the agenda.



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and Under-Secretary-General Muhammad Shaaban at the plenary session of the UN Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development

Selected clauses* from Rio

Food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture

115. We reaffirm the important work and inclusive nature of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), including through its role in facilitating country-initiated assessments on sustainable food production and food security, and we encourage countries to give due consideration to implementing the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. We take note of the on-going discussions on responsible agricultural investment in the framework of the CFS, as well as the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (PRAI).

116. We stress the need to address the root causes of excessive food price volatility, including its structural causes, at all levels, and the need to manage the risks linked to high and excessively volatile prices in agriculture commodities and their consequences for global food security and nutrition, as well as for smallholder farmers and poor urban dwellers.

117. We underline the importance of timely, accurate and transparent information in helping to address excessive food price volatility, and in this regard takes note of the Agricultural Market Information System hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and urges the participating international organizations, private sector actors and Governments to ensure the public dissemination of timely and quality food market information products.

118. We reaffirm that a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system will promote agricultural and rural development in developing countries and contribute to world food security. We urge national, regional and international strategies to promote the participation of farmers, especially smallholder farmers, including women, in community, domestic, regional and international markets.

Trade

281. We reaffirm that international trade is an engine for development and sustained economic growth, and also reaffirm the critical role that a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system, as well as meaningful trade liberalization, can play in stimulating economic growth and development worldwide, thereby benefiting all countries at all stages of development, as they advance towards sustainable development.

282. We urge the Members of the WTO to redouble their efforts to achieve an ambitious, balanced and development-oriented conclusion to the Doha Development Agenda, while respecting the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and consensual decision-making, with a view to strengthen the multilateral trading system.

*Some have been abbreviated here