

**Key messages of FAO statement on biofuels and food security at CFS Round Table,
07-08 October 2013**

Distinguished Delegates, dear colleagues,

Biofuel development is complex and multi-faceted and therefore assessment of its sustainability must be evidence-based, contextualized and integrated. This is the approach that FAO has taken and will continue to take.

On the basis of FAO's country-level work, we conclude that biofuels are not good or bad per se, it depends on how they are managed. Biofuels, and bioenergy more broadly, should be viewed as another opportunity for agriculture. And this investment in agriculture should be sustainably channelled. As all sustainable agriculture that should target poverty reduction and food security, it needs to be smallholder inclusive, economically viable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable.

Country level assessments should define what types of biofuels are viable, and how, where and for which purpose they should be produced. Thus, assessments should be at the single country level and distinctions should be made between country level objectives and impacts, and international level effects. In particular, one should not oversimplify assessments and solutions – such as that biofuels made from food crops always compete with food security and biofuels made from energy crops or residues never compete with food security - as this has proven wrong and can lead to wrong policy decisions.

In some countries, biofuel production is now moving toward being market-based, and there is significant interest in biofuels from new transport sectors (navy and aviation for example). **This means that biofuels are here to stay. Therefore, while one can argue for or against biofuels, it is absolutely key to develop the policies, programmes and capacities to make sure that biofuels – whatever their nature - are developed in a sustainable way.**

One should not think that reconciling food and fuel production is easy. But it is doable because, conversely to a few years ago, enough knowledge and tools are now available to help governments and operators manage risks and harness opportunities for biofuel development, while safeguarding vulnerable groups. However, knowledge is still lacking on some important aspects, such as how to prioritise the use of agricultural residues and on contingency plans in case of food price crises. FAO has started working on these topics.

FAO has gained significant knowledge on how to help achieve sustainable bioenergy – including reconciling food and fuel. This has translated into the development of FAO's Sustainable Bioenergy Support Package which can support governments and practitioners to make it possible to sustainably meet global and national food, feed and biofuel demand during the coming decades

We must not forget that access to modern energy is essential to achieving food security and sustainable development goals. Therefore actions are needed beyond biofuels, to foster comprehensive food-energy security policies and programmes. This includes improving energy efficiency, promoting the use of renewable energy and improving access to modern energy services at all stages of agrifood chains.

FAO has been working on integrated food and energy systems because such systems can be a means to achieve multifaceted development targets simultaneously. Tools and expertise now exist to assist governments in developing such integrated energy and food security strategies and FAO supports member countries through its “Energy-Smart Food for People and Climate” Programme; which includes sustainable biofuels.

FAO’s overall message is that reconciling biofuels and food security is not easy. But it is doable and through our collective efforts and knowledge and by ensuring smallholder inclusion, targeting poverty reduction and rural development, and safeguarding the vulnerable, we can make it happen.

Thank you