

Message for Farmers all over the World

Prof M S Swaminathan

M S Swaminathan Research Foundation

Chennai, India

1. This decade may mark the beginning of a new climate era, characterized by extreme and often unpredictable weather conditions and rise in sea levels. The recent Climate Conference in Copenhagen unfortunately failed to get a global commitment to halt economic growth based on high carbon intensity. Let us hope that the Climate Conference due to be held in Mexico in December this year will generate the political commitment essential to restrict the rise in global mean temperature to not more than 2°C, as compared to the mean temperature of today. Even a 2°C rise will affect adversely crop yields in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, which have a high degree of prevalence of endemic hunger. It will also lead to the possibility of small islands getting submerged. **The greatest casualty of Climate Change will be food and water security.**
2. Farmers of the world can help to avoid serious famines by developing and adopting climate resilient farming systems. 2010 has been declared by the United Nations as the **International Year of Biodiversity**. Biodiversity is the feedstock for a climate resilient agriculture. We should therefore redouble our efforts to prevent genetic erosion and to promote the conservation and sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity.
3. 2010 will also witness a major conference at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to review the progress made since the year 2000 in achieving the U N Millennium Development Goals. The first among these goals is the eradication of hunger and poverty. Unfortunately the number of hungry children, women and men, which was 800 million in 2000, is now over a billion. This is partly due to a rise in food prices, thereby making it

difficult for the poor to have access to balanced diet at affordable prices. There is no time to relax and the farmers of the world must redouble their efforts to increase food production through an ever-green revolution pathway of increasing productivity in perpetuity without associated ecological harm. Without the total commitment of the two billion farmers of the world to produce more by adopting climate resilient farming systems, the goal of “food for all and for ever” cannot be reached.

4. **This decade will show that the future belongs to Nations with grains and not guns.** Human destiny during this decade and beyond will be shaped by farm women and men. This Decade will thus be the **Decade of Farmers**.
5. Overcoming hidden hunger caused by micronutrient deficiencies like iron, iodine, zinc, Vitamin A and Vitamin B12 can be achieved by growing and consuming appropriate local vegetables and fruits. There is a horticultural remedy for every nutritional malady. **Moringa**, which is a jewel in the horticultural crown, is an example.
6. Urban and non-farming members of the human family should realize that we live on this planet as the guests of sunlight and green plants, and of the farm women and men who toil in sun and rain, and day and night, to produce food for over 6 billion people, by bringing about synergy between green plants and sunlight. Let us salute the farmers of the world and help them to help in achieving the goal of a hunger free world, the first among the U N Millennium Development Goals.

(M S Swaminathan)

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