

Attn: Government Delegations Attending the World Summit on Food Security  
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations  
Rome, Italy

16 November 2009

Dear Honorable Delegates,

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, remain concerned with the lack of activity from governments and institutions in addressing recent G8 proposals to explore a system of food reserves on the regional or global level. Specifically, we call upon governments at the World Summit on Food Security from November 16 –18 to recommend the implementation of food reserves to stabilize markets and for humanitarian support, as well as to follow up on these proposals with concrete action on the national and international level.

Governments have recently engaged with the idea of implementing food reserves as one method to address price volatility, low stock levels and failed markets in food and agriculture. In July 2009, G8 representatives at L'Aquila, Italy, signed a declaration that referred to reserves as a potential policy option, stating that: 'the feasibility, effectiveness and administrative modalities of a system of stockholding in dealing with humanitarian food emergencies or as a means to limit price volatility needs to be further explored. We call upon the relevant International Institutions to provide us with evidence allowing us to make responsible strategic choices on this specific issue.'

Despite these calls, there has been little movement on this issue following the L'Aquila meeting.

Yet there are compelling reasons to move forward in support of reserves. They can serve to stabilize prices and strengthen the role of governments to intervene in markets as needed to achieve their local and national food sufficiency. Farmer-owned and publicly managed reserves can also be utilized as a tool to develop local or regional markets where the private sector is under-capitalized or otherwise not sufficiently engaged. Governments can also employ buffer stocks to compensate for shortfalls in foreign currency reserves, which may not be sufficient to guarantee the needed imports when domestic harvests fail.

In light of these benefits, we call upon governments to set up the appropriate mechanisms to adopt a plan with multiple actions at all levels in support of food reserves.

Specifically, we request that governments take these critical steps:

- 1) **Mandate a stronger role for the UN Committee on Food Security** - to develop proposals with the UN World Food Programme for a system of global humanitarian food reserves. In addition, the Committee on Food Security should lead a review commission to assess how a coordinated approach to reserves could limit price volatility.
- 2) **Increase investment in developing countries** - to achieve culturally appropriate local and regional reserves. As donor governments seek to mobilize investment to strengthen national food security plans, food reserves should be a central plank of their foreign assistance agenda.

With the number of undernourished people in the world surpassing one billion for the first time, we believe that governments have an urgent responsibility to work cooperatively to overcome hunger and its causes. We ask that the issue of reserves form a key part of discussions at the World Food Summit on measures to address the root and multifaceted causes of food insecurity.

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Organizations supporting this letter include the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) USA, Share The World's Resources (STWR) UK, ActionAid Senegal, Asociacion Nacional de Empresas Comercializadoras de Productores del Campo, AC (ANEC) Mexico, Asian Farmers' Association Philippines, National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) USA, Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) Canada, Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de L'Afrique de L'Ouest (ROPPA) West Africa, Global Policy Forum USA, World Hunger Year USA, Collectif Stratégies Alimentaires Belgium, Food & Water Watch USA and the Soy Alliance UK.