

Boost Food Productivity in Developing Countries, Says China's Agriculture Minister

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- Developed countries should invest more to improve food productivity in developing economies
- To address food shortages, partnerships such as the New Vision for Agriculture are essential
- For more information about the Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2011, please visit: <http://www.weforum.org/newchampions2011>

Dalian, People's Republic of China, 15 September 2011 – To address food security challenges – especially how to feed the nearly 1 billion chronically hungry people in the world – more attention and investment are needed to boost food productivity, particularly in developing countries. “Food security is a common challenge for the world,” Han Changfu, China's Minister of Agriculture, told participants in a panel discussion of the issue at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2011. “Developed countries have to put more effort and resources into improving food productivity in developing economies.”

Business leaders among the panellists stressed the urgent need to help farmers. “Educating farmers can do a lot,” noted Robert Berendes, Head of Business Development at Syngenta International in Switzerland. “We need to increase investment.” Wu Hougang, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Dalian Zhangzidao Fishery Group, called on governments to invest more in the agriculture and fisheries industries, particularly in training people. China, Minister Han added, is willing to build agricultural training centres for farmers from developing economies, including in Africa. The focus should be on helping small farmers, said Paul Dudley Hart, Senior Vice-President, Global Partnerships and Alliances at MercyCorps, noting that China achieved success in food security through such efforts.

Governments should also take measures to prevent food price spikes due to financial speculation and the increased use of agricultural products for biofuel production when oil prices increase, warned Shenggen Fan, Director-General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in the United States. He proposed that governments consider fiscal policies that could educate consumers on the health consequences of different foods. “Can we tax unhealthy food and subsidize healthy food?” he asked.

To ensure food security around the world, “partnerships are essential,” Berendes concluded, identifying the World Economic Forum's New Vision for Agriculture initiative as an example. Led by 23 Partner Companies of the Forum, the programme works to foster collaboration to achieve sustainable agricultural growth through market-based solutions. The initiative has defined a vision that highlights agriculture's potential as a positive driver of food security, environmental sustainability and economic opportunity worldwide.

The initiative has catalysed five public-private partnerships around the world, including Vietnam and Indonesia. The partnerships support countries in realizing their agriculture sector goals by aligning investments, programmes and innovations with shared priorities for agricultural growth.

The 23 global companies leading the New Vision for Agriculture initiative include: Agco Corporation, Archer Daniels Midland, BASF, Bayer, Bunge, Cargill, The Coca-Cola Company, DuPont, General Mills, Heineken International, Kraft Foods, Metro, Monsanto Company, Nestlé, PepsiCo, SABMiller, Swiss Reinsurance Company, Syngenta, The Mosaic Company, Unilever, Vodafone Group, Wal-Mart Stores and Yara International.

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