

Gates Optimistic Food Crisis Can Be Solved

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- Global food production must double by 2050 and already nearly 1 billion people are hungry
- Technological innovation, cooperation and revived political will could avert disaster
- The theme of the 42nd World Economic Forum [Annual Meeting](#) is The Great Transformation: Shaping New Models. For more information, visit <http://wef.ch/Davos>

Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, 26 January 2012 – The world faces unprecedented challenges in feeding its growing population: 925 million people are hungry. Twenty-nine countries are listed as “extremely alarming” on the global hunger index. Food production will need to double by 2050 to feed a population forecast to hit 9 billion. But despite these challenges, William H. Gates III, Co-Chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USA, is optimistic.

Speaking at the 42nd World Economic Forum Annual Meeting today, Gates pointed to innovations in crop science, access to information for farmers and new models of cooperation between governments and private enterprise as some of the developments that can improve global food security. “I believe the opportunity to double or even triple [food] productivity is there,” Gates asserted.

Gates said he is encouraged to see the issue of food security back on the G20 agenda. “The last 10 years have been complacent about food security,” he noted, speaking about government initiatives. He added that he is pleased to see countries like China and Brazil being drawn in through the G20 because they have unique insights into feeding their domestic populations.

Gates was speaking on a panel that included J José Graziano da Silva, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome; Bruno Le Maire, Minister of Agriculture, Food, Fishing, Rural Affairs and Spatial Planning of France; Stefan Lippe, Chief Executive Officer, Swiss Re, Switzerland; Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Coordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance of Nigeria; and Paul Polman, Paul Polman, Chief Executive Officer, Unilever, United Kingdom, a Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2012. The panel was moderated by Josette Sheeran, Executive Director, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

Many of the panellists shared Gates’ optimism while acknowledging the size of the challenge. Polman cited the success of programmes including the New Vision for Agriculture, a World Economic Forum initiative that takes a holistic view of the supply chain, specifically for small-holding farmers. He also cited the ongoing commitment of his own company, Unilever, to decouple growth from environmental impact.

Okonjo-Iweala told participants that she believes Africa is able to feed itself, describing the need for change throughout the entire value chain. She cited the example of Malawi, which has in recent years turned from a net importer to a net exporter of food.

Le Maire also acknowledged the importance of the G20’s focus on food security. “The most important accomplishment of the French chairmanship was to put food security back at the top of the agenda,” he said.

With record participation of over 2,600 leaders from government, academia, business and civil society, the theme of this year’s Annual Meeting is The Great Transformation: Shaping New Models.

The Co-Chairs of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2012 are: Yasuchika Hasegawa, President and Chief Executive Officer, Takeda Pharmaceutical, Japan; Vikram Pandit, Chief Executive Officer, Citi, USA; Paul Polman, Chief Executive Officer, Unilever, United Kingdom; Alejandro Ramirez, Chief Executive Officer, Cinopolis, Mexico; Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer, Facebook, USA; and Peter Voser, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Dutch Shell, Netherlands.

Notes to Editors

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