

Improving Food Security in the Face of Climate Change

CUTS Breakout Session during UNCTAD Public Symposium on “Responding to Global Crises: New Development Paths”

1400 – 1530, 11 May 2010, Room XXII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Context

Food price hike and scarcity of 2007-8 renewed the focus of international community on food security. However, food insecurity is not something new for billions of people in developing countries. Despite improvements in productivity, hunger and malnutrition remain wide spread and the number of food insecure has increased over the years. The food crisis in 2007-08 has brought the issue to the fore and should be used as an opportunity to effectively deal with the scourge of food insecurity.

However, climate change will further aggravate the situation. Hardest hit will be those who already suffer and are the most vulnerable, for example, in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and small islands. Climate change will affect the current weather patterns leading to droughts in some areas and excessive rains and flooding in others. Existing patterns of agricultural production that are largely the basis for food will be hard to maintain in these areas. Consequently, availability of and access to food will become even more difficult.

Objective and Questions

The dire predictions need not come true if issues are properly understood and adequate action undertaken by all concerned. CUTS breakout session will provide a forum to the representatives of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations for an open and constructive discussion based on expert presentations by panelists. Issues related to food security and climate change and their inter-linkages will be addressed. Following are some questions that the breakout session will discuss:

- What lessons can be learnt from the food crisis of 2007-08? How can these be used to develop plans of action to deal with food insecurity?
- Who are the main actors in food trade and what is the role of MNCs in this regard?
- How will climate change affect food security? Who will be the most vulnerable to climate change induced food insecurity?
- What is the role of patents in controlling climate adapted/resisted seeds and what are its implications for food security?

- What are the linkages between food security and climate change? How well are these understood?
- How can trade help deal with food insecurity in the face of climate change?

Outcome

The possible twinning of food security and climate change challenges demand common understanding and differentiated assumption of responsibilities. CUTS is organizing this breakout session to contribute to the development of such a common understanding and realization of differentiated responsibilities. The summary of the discussion and possible recommendations are expected to lead to the outlining of ways in which climate change, food security and trade policies can be better aligned.

Programme

- 1400 Welcome and brief introduction by the Moderator, Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary-General CUTS International
- 1405 Presentation by Isabel Mazzei, Senior Policy Advisor, OXFAM International, Geneva on “Food security: learning from the 2007-08 food crisis”
- 1415 Presentation by Jonathan Hepburn, Agriculture Programme Officer, ICTSD on “Climate change: challenges for food security”
- 1425 Joint presentation by Luisa Bernal, Trade and Development Specialist, and Massimiliano Riva, Trade and Capacity Development Specialist, UNDP Geneva on “Aligning climate change, food security, and trade policies”
- 1435 Comments from the floor and general discussion
- 1520 Summary of discussion and recommendations by the moderator