

16th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

Business & Industry delegation introduction for General Plenary

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Thank you Mr. Chair,

Coming from the International Fertilizer Industry Association, it is a pleasure for me to express the gratitude of the business and industry delegation to the CSD member governments for the importance they place on the participation of Major Groups in this forum and for focusing on agriculture.

Mr. Chair, when Business & Industry –including members of the International Agri-Food Network, the International Chamber of Commerce the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and other business groupings – drafted its background paper a few short months ago, we wrote that cereal stocks were at their lowest in more than two decades. A report released by the USDA last week says that they have now reached their lowest point since 1970.

A number of short-term factors have exacerbated the situation, but the underlying issue confronting us today is that agricultural demand is growing faster than output. We must increase the overall productivity and efficiency of agriculture, or the crisis that we are facing today will become chronic. One of the first indicators of sustainable agriculture must be its ability to provide sufficient quantities of high-quality produce. In order to achieve this goal in a way that is environmentally responsible and socially sensitive, all stages of the agri-food chain must be as efficient as possible, using inputs optimally and minimizing waste.

In a world where land, water, other natural resources and labour are all limited, innovative agricultural technologies and good management practice are vital in order to increase the productivity of existing farmland in a sustainable manner. Diversity is necessary to address the groups who remain at the fringes of the global system and to help farmers become profitable entrepreneurs.

A globally sustainable solution will comprise a mosaic of site-specific solutions that does not exclude a priori any option. As the conditions in which we operate vary from year to year, we must also acknowledge that we are working towards a moving target.

In the Business & Industry background paper, we have given examples that show how innovations and research by business help lower prices; raise the quantity, quality and diversity of available food; and safeguard the environment. We look forward to sharing more experiences during the sessions and side events scheduled during the next two weeks so that we leave with new ideas on how to move closer to sustainable agriculture and rural development.