FORESTS IN AND BEYOND COPENHAGEN

CAN WE FEED TOMORROW´S WORLD?

A FOOD INDUSTRY AND CONSUMER VIEW: Key Messages

1/ Population, lifestyle and development pressures drive accelerated climate change and serious future food security issues.

2/ We face a perfect storm of increasing demands for energy, water and food. We will need some 50% more energy, 30% more water and 50% more food by 2030!

3/ As ever, the impacts will be dramatically different region by region. Africa and Asia are clearly already worst affected. Look, for instance, at Sub-Saharan Africa, or the billions now fed by waters from the river systems of the High Tibetan Plateau which are clearly threatened.

4/ Latest evidence and forecasts from climate change and agricultural science underline the seriousness and urgency of our predicament.

5/ We must understand that deforestation and agriculture account for over 30% of the world´s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Growing land-use pressures, notably for food and fuel, together with accelerating commercial drivers of deforestation, compound greatly GHGs and reinforce climate change with all its consequences.

6/ Over two decades atleast the global community has seriously under-invested in research for new energy and agriculture solutions. Only very recently has this begun to change. Even Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) has often largely neglected agriculture. We cannot talk about poverty alleviation, or development, in the so-called third world without including inseparable issues of energy, water, food, deforestation, biodiversity loss, other ecosystem degradation and, of course, climate change. Achievement of the socalled Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is thus intimately linked to this.

We, therefore, need integrated systems thinking and integrated policies and solutions where the often necessary trade-offs are explored and resolved.

7/ Leading companies in the food industry and the retail trade, such as Unilever, Walmart etc., understand and act on the above. These issues are moving to the heart of corporate strategy. The Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) is one example of a global collective effort to develop, share and promote sustainable agriculture technologies and practices. Various crops, sectors and techniques, including palm oil, coffee, cocoa, dairy, low or no tilling, drip-irrigation etc. have been prioritised todate.

8/ More recently the retail trade has learnt how big and important these challenges are and how crucial its role can be in educating as well as serving its customers. Local and global supply chains are being radically impacted and certification systems for more sustainable sourcing expanded through partnerships never seen before. Leading NGOs such as Greenpeace, Rainforest Alliance etc. are vital civil society leaders and partners in making this happen.

9/ In business we know that what gets measured gets done. Metrics, therefore, are an indispensable part of the policies and tool-kits that we must mobilise together in the public and private sectors to assess and to progress towards solutions for a sustainable future on this planet. (New metrics such as Beyond GDP and incorporation of the valuation of natural capital into our mindsets and accounting systems are crucial elements in this as well, but that´s another story).

10/ Following the Carbon Footprint Disclosure Initiative and the various Water Footprint tools, led inter alia by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the Forest Footprint Disclosure project (FFD) can be another vital measurement tool. It can help monitor and progress the slowing down and halting one day of deforestation, notably in the Amazon region, Indonesia, Malaysia, Democratic Republic of Congo etc..

11/ Right now there are numerous recent and upcoming UN and other global conferences to learn from on World Forests, Agricultural Science, World Food Security etc.. The over-arching issue is perhaps how best to extract integrated, comprehensive learning from such different segments, often silos, of society and thus ensure knowledge transfer and integrated solutions which lead to concrete actions.

12/ To feed tomorrow´s world we urgently need:

- A radical change of pace based on latest science, recognition of interdependencies and a huge collective effort to lower our footprint on the planet

- Integrated solutions and greater resilience in agricultural systems focused on the interlinked challenges of climate, agriculture and land-use including of course forests

- Best policies and investments from governments

- Best technologies, investments and practices from farmers and agri-related players big and small (including agro-forestry)

- Best behaviours from consumers through education and peer pressure.

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