



BACKGROUND NOTE

Renewing Agriculture for Better Food and Better Health **Tell us your vision on how we arrive at that goal**

Dear Youth:

You might know a saying that makes a lot of sense to people who can choose among many foods what they want for every meal of their day: *You are what you eat.*

If you twist the words a bit the saying applies also to the far too many hungry and malnourished people around the world: You are no more than what you eat. Because the ugly fact is that there are still around one billion people – men and women, youngsters and not least children – who went without decent and nourishing meals yesterday, will not get it today and not tomorrow. And too little or too poor food hamper people's life in so many ways; they are weak and can not work fully, they will easily be victims to sickness and – maybe most frightening – children low on enriching food during their growth will not be able to learn sufficiently well. They will throughout their life be marked by a hungry start in life.

So everyone needs enough food every day. And let us also twist that statement a bit. Nobody needs more than to grow and stay healthy. Too little and too much are both enemies of a good health – as you will already know.

Our food comes from agriculture. And agriculture will need to produce more over the coming years to keep up with a growing global population and to feed the hungry. But more is not the only demand on agricultural products. They will have to be of better quality, fresh, unspoilt and richer. So that even a basic meal of, say bread, vegetables, porridge, contains not only enough calories but also the important vitamins and minerals – micronutrients – missing in many people's meals today.

Agriculture is basic for our food and it is the basic industry for so many nations. A very great part of their workforce lives from agriculture, a large share of the money earned in rural and urban areas comes from agriculture and food production. But the working life is not always a healthy one. It is often back-breaking in all kind of weathers; many tools and machinery used are dangerous, and in many cases hazardous chemicals are used without proper protection of workers – their health is at risk. Agriculture in many parts of the world is not only an activity that directly concerns farmers and farmworkers and their families. It spills over into both rural and urban areas with pollution of waterways, drinking water and air from too high concentrations of poison, dung and waste, not least from animal production.

Those downsides of agricultural production will have to be minimized at the same time as more and better food are produced. Hard job ahead – but necessary.

This is your chance to make your voice heard and to show that you have ideas and visions, of importance to you and your future, to people around you and, actually, tomorrow's world.