



Speaker Summary Note

Session: Closing Remarks

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There is a saying that goes: Be careful what you wish for. When we planned this conference, we hoped it would get people from various countries, sectors, and disciplines engaged and discussing. But I confess that we did not anticipate the strong momentum that developed. You became engaged and started discussing on Day 1, and you haven't stopped since. You've discussed ideas in the official sessions, the side sessions, the discussion sessions, and the knowledge fair. You have networked and exchanged cards and formed new friendships at every opportunity. The high level of engagement and excitement at this conference, and the quality of the discussions, have been tremendous.

Let me now add a few thoughts to this discussion.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a timely moment for all of us to come together. A bigger role for agriculture on the international agenda, and the prospect of higher food prices, have turned the world's attention to food policy. Policymakers and the development community are looking for solutions. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh rightly said, every person has the right to food. We need to do much more to meet the human right to healthy, nutritious, and sustainably produced food.

So, after three days of deliberations, what do we have to offer? Over the course of this conference, we have seen a great deal of enthusiasm, a lot of good ideas, and a new openness to dialogue across sectors. How do we channel that energy into new ways of thinking and acting? To help launch a conversation about the next steps, we at IFPRI have prepared a "Way Forward" Statement with input from the Conference Advisory Committee. This statement proposes some initial ideas about how we can get started and is based on four building blocks.

First, fill the knowledge gaps.

We need to invest much more in learning about the links and the best ways to exploit them.

Second, do no harm.

The links between agriculture and health and nutrition can be both beneficial and detrimental, so, let's minimize the cases in which the three sectors work at cross-purposes.

Third, seek out and scale up innovative solutions.

So far, examples of interventions that combine two or three of these sectors are rare, but they do exist, and we should build on them.

Finally, create an environment in which cooperation can thrive.

Partnerships, communication, and mutual accountability can create incentives for working together.

This Way Forward statement is a living document subject to further debate and change. We invite you to go to the IFPRI website to contribute your own comments.

But beyond the Way Forward statement, as I've listened to the three days of presentations and discussion, I have noted some recurring themes.

First, I have heard that we need to do more to spread the word.

Those of us here at the conference are the converted, so we have to do more to communicate the importance of the links between agriculture, nutrition, and health to others. We all suffer from information overflow. To get our points heard, we need to combine hard evidence with good storytelling. By talking to both policymakers and various stakeholders about the potential for positive change, we will help build both the supply of and demand for sound policies in these areas.

Second, we need to improve the evidence base on these issues.

Our research agenda should tackle the most urgent questions. What kind of agricultural growth does most for people's nutrition and health? How can we measure nutritional impacts of agricultural interventions? How can we best organize policies and interventions that cross sectors? Stronger evidence will give policymakers and development agencies the confidence to act while agriculture remains high on the agenda, and a reason to act if the world begins to turn its attention away. This does not mean we need to wait until all the evidence is in before we take action—we already have some information about what works, and concrete actions can also serve as tools for learning.

Third, we need to improve the policymaking process.

Each of the three sectors perceives itself as neglected and underfunded, and no doubt they are. But we have generated a lot of information about the potential for synergies among the three sectors, and this potential becomes clear when we start talking to one another. Policymakers have the chance to capture an enormous opportunity to improve people's lives. Let us show them the way forward and support them in doing it.

Fourth, let's move this marketplace of ideas into education.

Let's make sure that students in agriculture, health, and nutrition don't graduate without knowing something of the other two sectors. Then, by the time they enter the professional world, these young people will have developed a habit of thinking multisectorally. This means changing how educational programs are organized. Those of you in the audience who are in education can lead, and we at IFPRI can provide materials that will support this effort.

These are key themes that have emerged at this conference, and we at IFPRI will follow up on them. We will do all we can to support better communication, improve the quality of the debate through research and information, and facilitate policy dialogue.

This morning I heard someone mention that this event is not only a learning forum, but also a leadership seminar and we are all agents for change. We have here 1,000 leaders here who can go out and promote these ideas in the rest of the world. Changing the status quo will not be easy. And we can't expect others to do all the changing. I'm reminded of a Chinese proverb: If you seek to change others, first change yourself.

As we wrap up this event, I'd like to thank the many people that made this conference possible. We are extremely grateful for the support and participation of our cosponsors. We greatly appreciate the work of the Conference Advisory Committee, which gave us invaluable guidance in the design of this conference. I want to thank the conference team, which organized this enormous undertaking, and especially Rajul

Pandya-Lorch, as well as the many people working behind the scenes who have made the conference run smoothly. Finally I want to thank all of you for your lively and insightful presentations and discussions.

I'd like to leave you with a challenge. As we've heard, we speak different professional languages, and many of us fail to understand the imperatives and constraints under which people in other sectors operate. So let's replace our stereotypes and first impressions of each with personal contact and sharing of ideas and information. I have sensed tremendous energy for doing this, so let us not lose this momentum.

Many of you may already be thinking, "I hope I get another opportunity to talk to people in these three sectors." This is the wrong attitude. These opportunities will not arise spontaneously. It is up to us to make them. I challenge each of you to think of ways to reach out to your counterparts--instead of waiting for them to come to you. IFPRI will do everything possible to facilitate this important dialogue.

We have started to talk the talk—now let's walk the walk. The challenge for all of us is to translate this talk into action that helps poor people achieve prosperous, healthy, and well-nourished lives. It has been said that "There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come." You've convinced us that this is an idea whose time has come.