

Sustainable agriculture key to recovery from financial crisis in Asia – UN



25 August 2009 – Any recovery programme to pull the Asia-Pacific region out of the global recession, which has morphed into a food crisis, must include sustainable agriculture measures, participants concluded at a United Nations meeting in Beijing.

At an event marking three decades of cooperation between China and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**), speakers underscored the need for stronger South-South cooperation to respond to the challenges posed by food insecurity and climate change.

Agriculture drives the livelihoods of the poor in the region – home to two-thirds of the world's undernourished – and employs 60 per cent of the working population, Noeleen Heyzer, ESCAP's Executive Secretary, said in her keynote address to the meeting yesterday.

Let us leverage our strengths to create a more integrated and inclusive Asia-Pacific region – free from poverty, free from want and free from hunger

"If future economic development is to be sustainable and inclusive, significant investments are required by governments to promote the development of pro-poor agricultural systems," she noted.

Rising food prices, compounded by fluctuating energy costs and the current financial crisis, has made innovation in agricultural technology vital, the UN official stressed.

The key to driving such advances lies in South-South cooperation, which "holds the key to building upon the best of what our region has to offer," Ms. Heyzer said. "Let us leverage our strengths to create a more integrated and inclusive Asia-Pacific region – free from poverty, free from want and free from hunger."

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