

Improving Food and Nutrition Security

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GERMANY - Moves to encourage innovative and resilient farming systems have the potential to make a considerable contribution to improving food and nutrition security.

This will provide a significant step forward in the fight against poverty, according to a European Commission Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) 2014

Working Meeting of experts at the International Green Week in Berlin.

Comprising experts from the European Commission, Bioversity International, and a private sector representative, the panel recognised that the frequency and severity of natural and man-made disasters, mainly impacting the poor has increased in recent years.

Studies show that the trend is likely to be further exacerbated by climate change and other factors such as demographic trends and urbanisation, and consequently should be addressed immediately.

Discussion also signalled a clear warning that agricultural activity in many parts of the world relies too heavily on too narrow a diversity of crops, to the extent that food and nutrition security is being put at risk.

The panellists highlighted the potential role that biodiversity can play in increasing resilience in terms of pest and disease control, disaster mitigation and crop stability, but this presupposes strong national conservation and use policies.

In October 2012 the European Commission published a report "the EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises" addressing such questions.

The EU has since launched two major new initiatives to improve resilience among vulnerable populations - "SHARE" (Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience) and "AGIR" in West Africa (Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Resilience).

For AGIR, the aim is to mobilise €1.5billion for the period 2014 -2020 specifically to support resilience building in West Africa.

The focus is on vulnerable population, improving development / humanitarian coherence and addressing the root causes of food crisis.

A further point underlined by the panellists was the broader message that building the resilience of farmers is increasingly being recognized as a key driver for sustainable agriculture and rural development. For example, in the EU, in the new programming period from now until 2020, CAP Rural Development programmes will be more focused on addressing the challenges of climate change and the environment in order to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of farmers.

Building resilience will also be supported through the broader research and innovation framework "Horizon 2020".

There is also increasing awareness that a greater understanding and emphasis of ecosystem resilience is required to reach the goal of sustainable development. Innovation Partnerships aim to provide a working interface between agriculture, bio-economy, science and others.

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