
38th World Farmers' Congress, Warsaw, Poland, June 4, 208

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF IFAP
JACK WILKINSON**

I am so happy to be here at the Congress. I would like to thank Mr. Serafin and his organization, plus the Polish government because I know they supported the activities as well. We've had a wonderful three days. We are looking forward to our plenary to start. I would like us all to thank our host once again.

I am going to talk seriously a few minutes about the work we have to do. This is my last Congress as President, and we've probably never had a more important time period for farmers internationally - to be heard and to give advice. As we know, these last two years have been very interesting. We've had some serious drought problems in some of our members' countries, Australia in particular and others. We've had a very dramatic season of storms and typhoons. One of the issues on our agenda later is climate change, with a major presentation here. We've seen world stocks of grain, particularly wheat and rice, at an all time low. And hence, we've had prices very high. This, in one way, is good for farmers - that we've had strong prices because they were terrible over the last decade for many for us. But of course, it puts much pressure on poor people who aren't farmers who have to buy this food, and we know this is a huge issue. We still have a world where over 850 million people are going to bed hungry every night. And a world where nearly 2 billion people are making less than 1 dollar and a 1/2 to 2 dollars a day. When you have that degree of poverty, obviously, any increase in the price of food is a critical issue

There are meetings in Rome going on right now to deal with this food crisis where many Heads of State are at the FAO with other UN agencies, working to plot a path forward. However, they must plot the right path forward. We've had twenty years of neglect in agricultural policy. You know that in your country, good policies have been seriously lacking on certain issues like extension services, issues of credit, issues of land availability and issues of infrastructure. These issues have been neglected in many countries. Services to agriculture are falling apart and our rural people are truly disadvantaged. And so, it's really no surprise to us in the business of agriculture to say after so many years of this kind of neglect, obviously, we run into problems.

We know that by 2050, we have to double in our food production because of the change in diet in many countries, Asia in particular. There has been a huge growth in the middle class which eats differently and wants more variety in their foods. We know that by 2050, we'll have over 9 billion people on this planet and we have to feed them on less land, and with less water. And this has to all be done within the context of a climate that is going to be continually putting incredible stress on our ability as farmers to meet the needs of

food production, environmental services and obviously as well, in some countries, the growth of the fuel industry.

So this is clearly a wake-up call for the world to start paying attention to agriculture. We need governments to stand in the shoes of farmers and ask their farmers, “What do we need to do to help solve your problems so that you, once again, can be the driving force in many nations’ economies?” We know that this can be done, but it will require a real movement by governments.

We have some representatives from our organization that are at the FAO's current meeting on the food crisis. This Congress will be passing a Declaration later today that we will be sending to the FAO.

When you get back from the IFAP Congress, I would to invite all of our members in this room to get a meeting with your Prime Minister, your President, your Finance Minister, whoever they are. Obviously as well, you include your Agricultural Minister. You need to ask of them and really demand of them a plan in your country - an agricultural strategy in your country that is going to start building the infrastructure you need to be successful. We must stand up for our members and we must lobby hard and we must fight hard.

There is no reason why in many countries, we still have a situation where we have post-harvest losses of 20 to 30 per cent. In some regions of some countries, it's as high as 50 per cent. We can solve this food crisis right now if we have the right support to do it. We've built AgriCord which is a very strong agency to help build capacity of our members, but I want you to put this capacity to work. It is time to not just talk about agriculture, it is time to push, lobby and demand the types of systems we want. We need to organize our producers even stronger in the market place. We have to get for our people what they need. Agri-business can be our partner, but to be a partner you have to have equal strength and so for small-scale producers and farmers everywhere, organization is a key activity on all fronts.

I think we have an organization that has never been stronger. We have a dramatic increase in staff. We now have individuals that can work in the regions and I'm already seeing the change in attitude in some of the individuals who are members in the regions. We have twenty new members which are awaiting confirmation that we have accepted their request to join our organization. That is a big step forward – twenty new members in one year. We have the tools available. We have never been heard more often. We have invitations to speak and lobby everywhere. We have the opportunity to meet with researchers – OIE and the list goes on and on. So, I want to invite you again to really work hard for the next three days. It is important what we have to say and do. We have to get our policies right and then we need to lobby, lobby, lobby to protect the interests of our farmers and obtain the rightful position in society we deserve.

Thank you once again for being here, and I hope we have a wonderful Congress.