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HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY: THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIOENERGY

Rome, 3 – 5 June 2008

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOOD SECURITY

ABSTRACT

1. Agriculture, rural livelihoods and food security are inextricably linked within the development and climate change challenges of the 21st century. Indeed, not only is food security an explicit concern under climate change; successful adaptation and mitigation responses in agriculture can only be achieved within the ecologic and economic sustainability goals set forth in both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Millennium Development Goals, and the World Food Summit.
2. The objectives of this document are to identify options for climate change responses in agriculture, which are consistent with safeguarding food security and rural livelihoods. Special focus is given to existing and potential future mechanisms necessary to support adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer, and financing at national, regional and international level.
3. Under climate change, reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience in rural communities in developing countries cannot be separated from, and in fact should be synergistic with, strategies that focus on socio-economic development of these very regions and actors. Increasing coping and adaptive capacities goes hand-in-hand with development. Augmenting resilience in vulnerable systems and increasing capacity to adapt with a focus on food security is achievable through specific cultural, technical, system and policy options, embedded within, but also informing, socio-economic development strategies that include diversification of income, rural energy planning, gender issues, etc.

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4. Adaptation strategies that help reduce the potential negative impacts of climate change on food production systems, maintaining global and regional food security, with a focus on rural livelihoods in poor developing countries, must be a priority of climate policy responses, taking into account the wide diversity of situations and considerations at the local level. At the same time, mitigation strategies aimed at stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases are a fundamental pillar of climate policy. A significant challenge of the coming decades will consist in finding appropriate ways to balance mitigation needs with adaptation priorities.

5. Many useful synergies for adaptation and mitigation in agriculture exist and should form the core of initial planning at national and international levels. These win-win solutions increase resilience of production systems in the face of increased climatic pressures, while providing significant amounts of carbon sequestration and/or reduction/reversal of land-based greenhouse gas emissions. They include forest conservation and management, agro-forestry for food and/or energy, landscape restoration, recovery of biogas and waste, and in general a wide set of strategies for soil and water resource conservation. Response actions must be implemented now in order to be effective over the next decades. Options for their inclusion into post-2012 mechanisms is discussed.