

7 December 2015

**Chatham House - A Sustainable Food Future
Session 2: Production, Supply and Consumption
7 December 2015; 2:15 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.**

**Presentation by Dr. Abdulrahman Jawahery
President, International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)**

Good afternoon distinguished colleagues,

- I am pleased to be here today on behalf of the International Fertilizer Industry Association and I would like to thank the organizers for giving me the opportunity to speak on the important topic of a sustainable food future in the context of agricultural production.
- Today I will be focusing on increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers through access to inputs, and extension via viable public-private partnerships. I will also touch upon how policy measures around education and innovation can enhance a global sustainable food system.
- Before that, allow me to tell you a little about my organization: IFA is the only international association representing the global fertilizer industry in over 85 countries worldwide. IFA member companies represent all activities related to the production and distribution of every type of fertilizer, their raw materials and intermediates, as well as service providers to the industry and research organizations and NGOs.
- The global fertilizer industry produces some 170 million tons of fertilizer nutrients annually. These are used in every corner of the globe to support sustainable agricultural production and food security. It is estimated that one half of our food supply would not exist without fertilizers. With global population projection expected to surpass 9 billion by 2050, including the doubling of population on the African continent, producing enough food to feed everyone in a manner that does not jeopardize the environment or threaten finite resources will be the main challenge in the coming years. There is already a worrisome yield gap in many regions of the world, especially developing ones. The

“**yield gap**” represents the difference between farmers’ actual and attainable yields. Balanced fertilization plays a key role in closing the yield gap. This is particularly relevant in Sub-Saharan Africa, where **the average maize yield is only one fifth of the attainable yield**. One cause for this is severe underuse of fertilizers. In most of Sub-Saharan Africa fertilizer application rates are below 10 kg/ha, while the global average for fertilizer use is about 100 kg/ha.

Small farmers around the world urgently need fertilizers to become more productive in order to:

- grow enough and more nutritious food;
 - become reliable suppliers;
 - increase their incomes and improve their lives in rural areas;
 - create jobs and new economic opportunities for the youth;
 - reduce gender inequalities by giving women access to productive resources;
 - protect our ecosystems and be resilient against climate change.
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- By providing farmers with the right nutrients for their crops, production can increase and the additional income derived from more plentiful crops will fuel additional growth and development in the local and regional economies. I am always startled by the fact that 75% of the world’s poor live in rural areas, which means that there are many farmers who do not grow enough food to sustain their families and cannot afford to buy additional food.
 - Research has demonstrated that deficiencies in nutrients reduce crop yields by 40-60%, but **also affect the health of people** who live in areas with high micronutrient deficiencies. **Adding micronutrients such as zinc and iodine** to fertilizers can increase the content and bioavailability of missing micronutrients, thus diminishing an array of human health risks, in particular diarrhea among children.
 - The industry’s commitment towards combatting malnutrition as well as micronutrient deficiencies makes us a strong supporter of the UN Secretary General’s Zero Hunger Challenge. IFA was one of the first industries to adopt formally and tailor the 5 pillars to the specifics of the fertilizer industry. Likewise, we have been very actively involved in the development of the SDGs, in particular Goal 2 on sustainable agricultural systems, which stresses the importance of access of farmers to agricultural inputs.

- We are grateful for this tremendous engagement opportunity with an array of experts provided by Chatham House. Forums such as this one are powerful platforms for discussion and exchange towards advancing change and progress through sharing of best practices and innovative ideas and processes. **Working in silos is not an option anymore.** Achieving progress requires a global partnership between all stakeholders private or public. A need for strengthened research and easy to access data will also fuel the design and implementation as well as the scaling up of successful initiatives.
- Many of our members are already on the ground providing extension services and facilitating financing initiatives such as **One Acre Fund** to expand smallholder access to fertilizer and AFAP (African Fertilizer Agribusiness Partnership) which provides badly needed financing to the fertilizer value chain in Africa, and with which IFA partners on the **African Fertilizer Volunteer Program (AFVP)**: The African Volunteer Program brings fertilizer experts from around the world to work alongside retailers, agronomists and farmers in Africa.

Moving on to the areas of education, research and innovation, I am compelled to highlight that in no other sector but agriculture are the knock-on effects of private investment on economic development more visible.

- It has been demonstrated that investing in agricultural research brings by far the best return on investment on poverty alleviation. Farmers tend to make up the poorest fringes of the population worldwide. Farmers are net food buyers and thus more dependent on price fluctuations, while at the same time producing the food we eat. By bringing farmers out of poverty we can achieve goals relating to gender equality, education, health, and economic opportunities. Farmers are entrepreneurs, and other private actors have a key role to play in making sure that more smallholders move out of subsistence farming to become commercial farmers.
- **Investment-driven** measures can moreover target specific groups, such as smallholders and women, and facilitate their access to agricultural finance, training, capacity building, knowledge transfer and innovative practices.
- At the same time, the food and agriculture sector has enormous potential for environmentally sustainable development. All actors in the agri-food supply chain face

the same need to produce more with less. We need to make better use of our arable land and produce more nutritious crops from the same acreage. While the solutions will differ by region and by landscape, we will need to adapt to this new reality of sustainable agricultural intensification.

- Part of it is the development and dissemination of best practices, and industry-wide standards, such as the nutrient stewardship initiatives from the fertilizer sector. We know that not all nutrients applied are taken up by the plants since we are dealing with biological systems, but the **fertilizer industry is actively working to reduce nutrient losses to the environment**. The industry has and continues to be engaged in scientific research to arrive at site and soil specific best fertilizer management practices and in outreach and dissemination to farmers of these BMPs. It is hugely important to ensure that farmers around the world get trained on using the right fertilizer products at the right rate, right time and right place – that’s a program the industry has called the 4Rs. This is a good example of where many actors have to come together to address a significant challenge. The industry alone cannot reach out to the millions of smallholders worldwide. We are keen to increase our collaboration with farmer groups, other players in the agri-food value chain, agronomic research institutions and with governments.
- IFA members are shoring up and improving their production capacity, creating more tailored, so-called “specialty fertilizers” and promoting smarter sustainable crop nutrition practices like the 4Rs. To do these things well, our member companies also need an enabling environment to conduct better business. This is where governments have a role in fostering peace and stability, tackling corruption and undertaking infrastructure projects that will enable private actors to better work towards a sustainable food system.
- **To accomplish goals such as closing the gender gap** by facilitating women’s access to productive inputs, **combatting malnutrition** caused by micronutrient deficiencies, **facilitating inclusive growth** for smallholder farmers by building up a vibrant fertilizer supply chain..., all this will require solid and well-functioning programs and partnerships that IFA will continue to build and promote for a sustainable global food system.

Thank you.