

What is the International Conference on Sharing Innovative Agribusiness Solutions? – Cairo, Egypt 26 – 27 November 2008

Cairo, Egypt 26 – 27 November 2008 The current global food crisis has highlighted the extreme vulnerability of developing country populations to fluctuations in food prices and supplies. In response to this complex challenge, UNIDO is increasing its efforts towards strengthening agribusiness value chains, expanding developing countries' food supplies and their access to markets technology and investment.

As part of its response, UNIDO is organizing, in cooperation with the Government of Egypt and the SEKEM Initiative, an international conference on sharing innovative agribusiness solutions, to be held in Cairo, Egypt, from 26 to 27 November 2008.

The conference will bring together agribusiness stakeholders, representatives of public and private technical and financial institutions, international organizations, donors, NGOs and academia to share innovative agribusiness solutions and best practices that can potentially be scaled up and/or transferred to other countries or regions.

The inspiration for the conference was the success of the UNIDO project "Traceability of agroindustrial products for the European market," which assists Egyptian farmers and the food industry to increase food safety and overcome technical barriers to trade, thus facilitating the access of Egyptian food products to export markets.

Rather than discussing problems and assessing needs, the conference will provide an opportunity for matchmaking between those seeking ways to achieve sustainable agribusiness development and those with innovative solutions, as well as finance for development assistance and investment.

Conference preparations are being supported by a team of high-level experts, who are assessing the innovative solutions to identify those most suitable for replication, as well as by an International Advisory Board (IAB). The members of the IAB will provide independent views and informed advice on the conference and its follow-up, in order to help promote it and ensure maximum impact.

The opening session of the conference will be moderated by the award winning journalist Todd Benjamin, contributing financial editor for CNN International.

Conference Themes

1. Supply/value chains, market access and linkages: In order for farmers, especially small farmers, and SMEs to participate in a sustainable manner in the food industry supply/value chain, transaction-based mechanisms and viable business solutions must be developed to fill gaps along the chain. The theme will focus on creating market access for these farmers and food processors, linking producers with buyers.

2. Compliance with standards and conformity assessment: Building the capacity of agribusiness actors in developing countries is essential to enable them to comply with standards throughout the supply chain, including SPS measures, in order to overcome barriers to trade. Greater compliance will increase the quality and safety of food and protect consumers in both developing and developed countries.

3. Technology and value addition: Developing countries need to progress from producing and exporting commodities to adding value and increasing productivity through sustainable processing and manufacturing. This is also essential for domestic food security as it is a means of reducing post harvest crop losses.

4. Innovative forms of financing: New forms of financing are needed for both technical cooperation and business investment, including investment in domestic enterprise development (patience capital vs. venture capital) and in public and private infrastructure.

Potential participants should register at www.agribusiness-solutions.org. Those who are interested in presenting a solution to an agribusiness problem and/or are seeking a solution to an agribusiness problem should complete the respective submission form (also available on the web site). These submissions will be considered by a technical selection committee and, if selected, the participant will be invited to present it at the conference, participating as well in a matchmaking event. The best model solution identified in each of the four themes will receive an award at a ceremony during the Conference. UNIDO will be able to provide travel and accommodation for a limited number of participants.

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