

## Food Insecurity and Sustainable Rural Development

When our Study Circle was founded in 1977, Development Aid still received enthusiastic support of a large part of the Dutch population. The Netherlands was leading in International Development Aid. We donated more than the international norm of 0.7% of Gross National Income. And we were proud of it! However, in the nineties, development cooperation lost much of its glamour. In the year 2000, there was a kind of revival. The UN formulated Millennium Development Goals, universally adopted by the Member States.

The Seminar of today is mainly concerned with Millennium Development Goal 1: halving the percentage of extreme poverty; decent work for everyone and *halving the percentage of hungry people*. With regard to this goal, a lot of progress has been made since the reference year 1990. The FAO report "The State of Food Insecurity 2013" points out that developing regions as a whole made significant progress towards the (MDG 1) hunger target. If the trend of the past 23 years continues, a level close to this target may be reached in 2015.

Despite overall progress, marked differences per region persist. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment. While one in eight people around the world go hungry, it is one in five in Sub-Saharan Africa. The FAO Report concludes that long-term commitment to integrating *food security* and *nutrition* is the key to hunger reduction. Besides, *comprehensive reforms* and *improvements in the investment climate* are crucial for achieving MDG 1. Sub-Saharan Africa has already for a long time been a special target region for Dutch Development Aid. Therefore, it is a pity that in the coming years the budget for food security,

water, environment and climate will be substantially reduced, whilst according to the FAO Report considerable and immediate *additional efforts* are required.

It seems that our development cooperation (with Africa as with other developing regions) needs a new drive:

- to compensate the reduced public investments in agriculture with private investments (e.g. equity);
- to bring back solidarity with the poverty-stricken people of the world, both in development debate and in development practice;
- to promote a just balance in urban and rural development;
- to invest in agriculture, to improve food security in an increasingly unsafe world;
- to invest in (industrial) activities to provide people with work and income and keep them in rural areas so to create additional demand for food there;
- to provide for more innovation and exchange of knowledge (with Food Valley) and invest in personal relations with influential local politicians, businesspersons and experts;
- to improve agricultural labor productivity to increase production;
- to safeguard future availability of scarce resources (especially land and water);
- to protect agricultural areas against the impacts of climate change;
- to counter over-commercialization of development organizations; and,
- to join and strengthen EU initiatives for rural development, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.