

Technical Consultation Meeting

“Assessing the Potential of Insects as Food/Feed in assuring Food Security”

FAO, Rome. Lebanon Room, 23,24,25 January 2012

Welcome words by Ms Eva van Woersem, Alternate Permanent representative
FAO

Dear Mr Rojas-Briales, ADG of FAO, participants from FAO, universities and the private sector from all over the world.

I would very much like to welcome you all to this technical consultation meeting ‘Assessing the potential of insects as food and feed in assuring food security’.

And I also would like to express my gratitude to FAO and the University of Wageningen for organizing this event.

The objective of this event is threefold:

1. Map the state of the art
2. Identify where we want to be in 20 years’ time and what are the knowledge gaps
3. Elaborate an action plan: what needs to be done and by whom

I believe the last point is the most important one. Of course research and consultation meetings are needed to assess the potential role of insects for ensuring food security.

But now it is time for action. For concrete action. It is time for concrete action to make the difference.

During the next 3 days you should constantly keep in mind what is the added value for people in need and how can you really make the difference on the ground, at country level. This is a very important lesson my ambassador ms Gerda Verburg taught me the first day in office and it is something she repeats almost every day. This meeting should be action and results-oriented. So not where you want to be in 20 years’ time but in 5 years’ time: maybe by then insect farms should be something obvious?

And not only for feed but also for food.

Eating insects is something quite normal in a lot of countries. Even in the Netherlands it is becoming more popular. During the Christmas period it was even possible to buy insects in large supermarkets. And top chefs use it in their menus as well, so it is turning into a delicacy.

But, still there is a lot of work to be done to get insects on the menu as a normal, rich and sustainable source of protein all over the world.

In general insects are seen as a burden. Everybody has seen pictures of plagues of grasshoppers. But instead of chasing them away, we could start catching and breeding them and convert them into food. Why not?

Turn a curse into a blessing!

Move a problem into a challenge to create a promising opportunity

Let me put this into context

In the year 2050 we will need 3 earths to feed 9 billion people. The world today is producing enough food to feed the entire world's population. There is no explicit urgency yet, but as soon as shortage problems occur and food security decreases, the transition will have to speed up.

Moreover almost one billion people are hungry. Another billion malnourished, lacking the essential micronutrients they need to lead healthy lives. One billion adults are overweight and almost half a billion are obese.

It is necessary to address the needs of a growing world population, richer and more urbanized, while at the same time preserving resources. The transformation of food systems towards sustainable diets is an essential part of a green economy. It offers vast economic and social opportunities, while preserving natural resources.

FAO is playing an important role in putting Sustainable Food Systems on the global agenda.

Especially the concept of and experience with climate smart agriculture is most promising. It is a win- win concept.

1. Produce more with less (growing income for farmers).
2. Strengthen livelihoods and durable development (more income, more education, more sustainable economic development)
3. Less use of scarce commodities and better resource management

On the other hand: sustainable consumption is also a powerful driver of Green growth Economy, to reduce ecological scarcities and improve social equity, between consumers and also between nations. It involves harnessing global demand by promoting more sustainable diets in rich countries, where reducing waste at consumer level should be a priority.

Insects are important as a protein source in light of food security because of the high conversion rate and the short life cycle. Furthermore:

- Insect rearing reduces the environmental burden
- Insects produce less greenhouse gasses and less ammonia
- Insects can grow on waste produced by the agriculture and food industry
- Insect rearing uses less space of the available agricultural land: 70 percent of this land is now in use for conventional meat production.

Currently the opportunities are in the production of insects and insect proteins for the animal feed industry but this very well could be expanded for human consumption: creating a better balanced diet which has far less impact on the environment.

Let me now just say something about the Dutch policy on Green Economy and Food Security including top sectors

I will start by quickly explaining the golden triangle concept as applied in The Netherlands: by this we mean the cooperation between the government, knowledge institutions and companies. This triangle establishes the necessary link between theory and practice and is, at least in our view, a prerequisite for success.

Let me explain

On the business side there are many opportunities for innovation in vegetable and animal protein products and for improvement of productivity and products in that regard.

On the research side there are research centers, for example the protein innovation center PROTIN. PROTIN is an initiative to generate and apply knowledge on proteins in general and alternative protein sources in particular (food and non-food).

And the government tries to stimulate knowledge sharing, cooperation and innovation. And furthermore offers room for innovative initiatives to develop faster.

Our ambition is sustainable development, while strengthening the economy at the same time.

A smart and keen combination of innovation and sustainability is our win win concept to really boost green growth.

The Dutch government has identified 9 promising economic top sectors in the context of green growth and has formulated ambitions in these fields. At least 5 of these sectors are also very relevant for the issue we deal with here today: agro-food; horticulture and commodities, energy, water, life sciences and above this: also high tech and logistics can be of great importance.

Let me give you 2 examples:

The Dutch Ministry of Economic affairs, agriculture and innovation subsidizes the innovative research programme 'Sustainable production of insect proteins for human consumption.

The collaboration between the ministry and the trade organization of insect rearing companies guarantees practicability and application of the research results: from product to consumer.

The second example is the Flying Food initiative, a Public-private initiative (involving the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs, research institutes and small business). It started in Kenya but there is already an ambition to put this experience into practice in more African countries.

The aim of this initiative is the development and establishment of 100 small scale cricket farms in Africa in order to increase availability of proteins for underserved people, accelerate local entrepreneurship and create employment and income generation.

The Dutch consortium adds value with applied knowledge and experience.

This is a win-win situation. It is valuable experience for the Netherlands and supports the local communities. An initiative like this really makes a difference.

So to conclude I wish you all a fruitful and successful workshop. I hope that you will learn from each other and cooperate even more. As I said at the beginning of my speech it is now time to translate all the knowledge you have into practice. We

need action! I will be here again in three days at the closure of this meeting and looking forward to hearing what you have achieved in the coming days and how these three days can and will make the difference in the life of millions of people.

I wish you all the inspiration you need, to work not only on behalf of our generation,

but especially to create a future for our children and grandchildren

Thank you