

Agriculture key to ending hunger



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LAST week, many leading figures in business, government and civil society gathered in Davos, Switzerland, for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum. And Kraft Foods was there, listening and sharing what we have learnt, and urging action to tackle three of the greatest challenges facing the world today: food security, environmental degradation and economic development. What did we ask leaders to do? Invest more in agriculture.

As outlined in a soon-to-be-released roadmap, *A new vision for agriculture*, the latest news in solving the age-old problems of hunger and malnutrition is not new. In fact, it is the lesson of the last 40 years: where investment in agriculture has been a priority, prosperity has followed. Just look at how the Green Revolution sparked economic growth and lifted millions in Latin America and Asia out of poverty. Smart investment in agriculture reduced malnutrition rates while improving farmer livelihoods and farm communities.

Conversely, look at that same period in Africa, where the Green Revolution failed to take root. For too much of the continent, the result has been persistent famine, political strife and economic collapse. Of course, it is more complex than this, but the fact remains that much of the world's failure to make lasting improvement in addressing hunger and malnutrition has been due to the well-intended but, in hindsight, misguided development policies that drove investment out of the farm sector.

It is not a coincidence that the UN estimates that of the billion people in the world who are hungry or malnourished today, nearly 70% are engaged in agriculture. Failed crops, low yields, lack of viable markets and poor infrastructure have contributed to a situation where millions of farmers can neither

feed their families nor make a living. And, even where agriculture is thriving, we should be concerned about its environmental impact, which include nearly 70% of worldwide water withdrawals and up to 30% of greenhouse gas emissions.

But regardless of the reasons, the simple fact is that the agriculture sector is not working effectively enough in many parts of the world, nor as a global system. And, we are all suffering because of it. But, it doesn't need to be this way. Fixing agriculture — and, in turn, banishing hunger and malnutrition — is clearly possible. It is a matter of focus, prioritisation, political will and collective action.

To help lead the way, Kraft Foods has been step-

ping up its efforts. As the world's second-largest foods company, it shouldn't be a surprise that we are heavily involved in fighting hunger and malnutrition. For decades, we have provided food aid, shared technical expertise in food production, funded nutrition education and developed products that address local nutrient deficiencies. Through these actions and by working with others, we have fed more than a billion people in the last 20 years. We are proud of that.

But it has not been enough. What is required is collective focus and significant investment in agriculture to address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition. Investing more — and more wisely — in market-based farm solutions will help ensure that the world can produce nutritious foods in a way that is sustainable for the planet and economically advantageous for farmers and consumers.

This is not philanthropy — it is good business. For example, we are already the largest buyer of Rainforest Alliance and Fair Trade-certified cocoa in the world. And now, working with others, we are collectively investing nearly \$100 million in a broad range of sustainable agriculture initiatives to improve the lives and livelihoods of more than one million farmers in the developing world.

We invest because we know that if we can improve the social, environmental and economic status of farmers, they will keep growing the high-quality ingredients we need to make our delicious products, like the cocoa we use in our Milka and Cadbury chocolates.

Investing in agriculture is not a quick or easy fix, especially during global recession. But I believe it is time for a fresh look — time to harness the power of agriculture to drive food security, environmental sustainability and economic opportunity. Whether it is cocoa or coffee, soy or sugar, the goal is the same: new and unprecedented collaboration between farmers, companies, governments and civil society, with governments setting the direction, businesses investing and innovating, and civil society mobilising the community. History has shown that investing in agriculture drives a virtuous cycle. The lessons are clear, but there is a missing ingredient: more action. And that is up to all of us.

(The author is chairman and CEO of Kraft Foods Inc)

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