

## **Full text of letter to G8/G20 leaders on Food Waste: A Missed Opportunity by Global Leaders**

5 June 2013

On behalf of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), an international network of over 80 churches and church-related organizations with tens of millions of constituents around the world, I write to recognize your efforts to address the most pressing and difficult global challenges.

We would especially like to acknowledge the work that you are doing to promote global food security. In tackling this issue at global and national levels, several of you have placed significant emphasis on the importance of investing in small-scale food production as both a cornerstone of food security and a way of life in rural communities, recognizing that, despite the many challenges, it provides key opportunities for a people-led transformation driven by actors rooted in their territories and local communities. It is also a central – and increasingly recognized – concern that smallholder food producers be enabled to increase production in environmentally sustainable ways.

However, we are concerned that current policy discussions on global food security have focused on boosting agricultural production without addressing the wastage of 30% to 50% of all food produced for human consumption (approximately 1.2 to 2.0 billion tonnes each year), due to inadequate infrastructure, wasteful practices by retailers and consumers, and the lack of proper policies and regulations. Our world produces abundant food - more than enough to feed our growing population - but almost 1 billion people still face chronic undernourishment and hunger in the midst of this abundance. Meanwhile, over 1 billion people suffer the health consequences of obesity and related malnourishment.

The shocking co-existence of chronic hunger alongside morbid obesity, both causing millions of deaths and destroying for millions more the opportunity to live to their full potential, must galvanize global action. A key part of the solution is a comprehensive response to food waste.

**Inspired by our faith, we call on the leaders of the G8 and G20 to prioritize the reduction of food waste and post-harvest losses in order to help meet the challenge of feeding the world.**

We hope that G8 and G20 leaders will work together to find appropriate solutions to:

- **Invest in local infrastructure for small-scale farmers in the developing world:** G8 and G20 countries have the financial resources to tackle the problem, both at home and in developing countries where waste most often stems from lack of adequate post-harvest facilities - including storage and processing facilities, technology and training. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa 25% of fruits and vegetables are lost during processing and packaging, and another 17% during distribution. Greater investment in infrastructure for food storage, processing and preservation at the local level, and for transportation to market, should be a key priority for developing country governments and the international development community.
- **Regulate and educate for social responsibility:** G8 and G20 leaders need to put into place the necessary regulatory frameworks to address food waste in retail chains. Similar actions should also be encouraged at the consumer level through public awareness campaigns to reduce consumer waste in the developed world and,

in the developing world, by sharing effective ways of preserving food using local traditional methods.

- **Put small-scale food producers at the centre:** Actions to address food waste should be taken within a comprehensive approach that supports long-term sustainable farming systems that keep small-scale food producers at the centre. Knowledge sharing and empowerment of small producers, who generate the vast majority of the food consumed globally, are key to effective, environmentally-sustainable, long term solutions to global hunger. Investment in people and local initiatives is not just a choice, it is essential in tackling the problems associated with our food system today.

G8 countries have a special responsibility since their citizens consume a disproportionate amount of the world's resources, including food, land, water and energy. Food has become so cheap and accessible in affluent societies that people have lost sight of the consequences of their consumption patterns on the environment and on the livelihoods of those who produce the food that they eat. Increasingly, wealthier people expect a wide selection of fruits and vegetables to be available regardless of the season and local production patterns, and for such produce to be cosmetically perfect. In addition, a growing number of people around the world are consuming larger quantities of meat. These practices are resulting in increased food waste at retail and consumer level, and in a growing burden of environmentally unsustainable meat production, as well as increasing health consequences from over-consumption.

We believe that we are at a critical moment for shifting our food production and distribution systems to more sustainable ones that will provide abundance today and for future generations. We also believe that the driving force for rural transformation must be the people themselves, through a community-led approach that gives voice to the members of the actual farming communities upon which food security depends.

In a world challenged by climate change, a growing population, and a global economic crisis, we need to be smarter, more efficient, and fairer about the way we produce, distribute and consume our food. By eliminating waste in the food chain, we could reduce the amount of food that we will need to produce, and invest in regenerating natural resources for future decades with increasing populations.

Making this shift will require bold leadership. We hope you will rise to the challenge.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Prove  
Executive Director