

Joint press statement with the BMELV

Agriculture is essential for biological diversity

International Day for Biological Diversity, 22 May 2008 during COP 9

Sustainable agriculture is important not only for the conservation of biodiversity but also for the global food supply and sustainable employment in the agricultural sector. This link was highlighted today by Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel and State Secretary for Agriculture in the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection Gert Lindemann on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD). "However, if agriculture is too intensive or not appropriately adapted it can pose a substantial risk for biological diversity," said Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel. "Agriculture and nature conservation must therefore find ways to work together hand-in-hand to significantly reduce the global loss of biodiversity. This is an ambitious task to be addressed at COP 9 by the representatives from 190 countries.

State Secretary Gert Lindemann said: "All over the world, biological diversity is vital for human survival, and this is particularly so for farmers. It is the basic prerequisite for food and other raw materials. Furthermore genetic diversity secures options for future breeding and offers potential for improving global food security - potential which will disappear irretrievably if genetic diversity is lost."

The United Nations proclaimed the International Day for Biological Diversity in order to raise global public awareness of the importance of biological diversity. This year's IBD theme is "Biodiversity and Agriculture" and the day falls during the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Bonn. The COP 9 negotiations will also deal with agriculture's important contribution to the conservation of biological diversity. Today, global food supply is based on only around 10 plant species and 5 livestock breeds. At the beginning of the last century, Indian farmers were still cultivating 30,000 different varieties of rice - they now grow barely 30. Of Germany's 63 breeds of livestock 52 are in the "endangered" or "watch" categories.

In view of global developments such as climate change and increasing demand for food of a world population set to rise from today's 6 billion to 9 billion by 2050, we face the major challenge of securing global food supply while at the same time ensuring an efficient and flexible agriculture which also takes account of both climate protection and nature conservation objectives.

To address this challenge it is especially important to tap the potential for new markets and sources of income through innovative products based on the diversity of species, crop varieties and livestock breeds. Here in Bonn at COP 9 we must anchor these goals in agriculture and set our course in the right direction.

Further Information:

- www.cbd.int: website on the International Day for Biodiversity - www.bmu.de/un-conference2008

