

**Remarks by Embassy of Ireland at the Conference on
"Unleashing Agriculture Potential to Improve Nutrition
and Health".**

Cross Roads Hotel, Lilongwe, 26 September 2011

**Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Peter Mwanza,
Ambassador of the United States of America, Jeanine
Jackson,
Principal Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation
and Water Development, Erica Maganga,
The Principal Secretary, Jeff Luhanga
Government Officials, Diplomatic colleagues,
Representatives of IFPRI and International Organisations,
Representatives of NGOs and Civil Society Organisations
Invited Guests,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

- **The devastation of famine and hunger is part of Ireland's own history. This legacy of famine has taught us the importance of diversified agriculture and the production of good food remains a key part of our economy today.**
- **The Government of Ireland has made an expressed commitment to work to eradicate hunger through Ireland's development cooperation programme, Irish Aid.**

- **We know that to eradicate hunger countries have to produce sufficient food. But that is not enough.**
- **To address under nutrition requires that farmers produce nutritious and diversified food crops. This is the nexus between agriculture, nutrition and health. While it might appear to be straight forward, this conference will learn that there are many issues to be addressed.**
- **Countries that are agriculture based like Malawi derive most of their nutritional needs for a healthy life from the food that they produce and the income that agriculture can generate to enable access to a nutritious diet.**
- **However, experience has shown that the links between agriculture, nutrition and health may not be taken into consideration in the way business is conducted.**
- **This conference is crucial, to trigger action that links the three areas and encourages sectors to work together for the benefit of vulnerable people in Malawi.**
- **In February of this year IFPRI organised the global Conference on Leveraging Agriculture for Improved Nutrition and Health, in New Delhi, India. Malawi must be congratulated for being the first country to follow up by holding a national event to develop a country strategy, so soon after the New Deli conference.**

- **This demonstrates the commitment of Malawi to improving the nutrition and health of all its people and confirms the early riser status of Malawi as designated under the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement.**
- **In his statement at the UN High Level Meeting on Nutrition on September 20th, Ireland's Tanaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Trade and Foreign Affairs, commended how Malawi, in the 1,000 days special campaign, brought knowledge of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) to the whole population targeting change at national, district and household level.**
- **It is this ownership at all levels and across all sections of society that will contribute to the success of the SUN initiative.**
- **This conference today, brings together key policy, programme and research experts in Agriculture, Nutrition and Health from the Government of Malawi, civil society organisations, academia, the private sector and the development partners as well as visitors from other countries who come to learn and to benefit from the different experiences.**
- **These two days offer an excellent opportunity to learn from each other, explore challenges, opportunities, and gaps regarding links between Agriculture,**

Nutrition and Health. It enables Malawi to define how the agricultural sector can become the engine for improving the lives of all its citizens.

- **I want to take this opportunity to assure you that Ireland, through its development programme “Irish Aid”, is committed to supporting a strong Agricultural sector in Malawi. We will continue to support the Farm Input Subsidy Programme and other efforts to achieve food security and to diversify food production to include legumes and other nutritious crops.**
- **We will deepen our commitment to support sustainable agricultural business through support along the legume value chain. Through a range of work to develop a strong national certified seed industry for legumes, Irish Potatoes, Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato and rice. We will continue our support for agro-forestry particularly fruit and macadamia trees.**
- **We will work hard with the Government of Malawi and all our partners. We will continue our very productive partnership with USAID to jointly deliver on many of these commitments.**
- **Finally, I wish to highlight a few issues that I hope can be taken into consideration in your deliberations during these two days:**
 1. **How can we effectively trigger action and promote integrated public policy for Agriculture**

to address the nutrition and health needs of Malawi?

- 2. Women play a particularly important role in Agriculture and in family nutrition and health. How can we ensure that the particular circumstances of women are taken into account more systematically when implementing policies and plans?**
 - 3. To what extent will this conference address the issue of gender and education when it comes to Agriculture, Nutrition and Health?**
 - 4. How well do the farmers themselves, many of whom are women, understand the link between Agriculture, Nutrition and Health and how can farmers become champions producing nutritious, healthy food?**
- With these remarks, I wish you success in this conference. The organisation has involved a very big team effort between Government of Malawi, IFPRI, the United States of America, Ireland and other Development Partners.**
 - Such collaboration will continue to be crucial if we are to sustain the momentum and implement the learning from this Conference.**

- **It is my sincere wish and firm belief that the outcomes of the conference will, indeed, unleash the potential of agriculture to be at the centre of Malawi's efforts to bring about sustainable, nutritious and diversified food security and thus contribute to a better future for all the people of Malawi.**

Thank you