

## **Call for Leadership on Food Reserves at the World Food Summit**

### *Civil Society Urges Heads of State to Support Food Reserves to Address Hunger, Stabilise Markets*

Rome (November 16, 2009) – Civil society organisations have called on governments attending the World Summit on Food Security (16-18 November) to support the use of food reserves as an essential step towards achieving universal food security.

In a letter released at the commencement of the Summit in Rome, governments are urged to follow up on previous commitments to explore a system of food reserves as a tool for stabilising markets and for humanitarian support.

Previously, representatives at the G8 meeting of government leaders in July engaged with the idea of implementing food reserves as one method to address price volatility, low stocks levels and failed markets in food and agriculture. But since calling for further investigation into the use of reserves, there has been little movement on the issue.

“Food reserves are an important tool for governments trying to address hunger and stabilize markets for their farmers,” said Alexandra Spielloch of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). “We cannot allow food reserves to drop off the radar at the WFS.”

The letter outlines a number of key reasons to move forward in support of food reserves. These include stabilising commodity prices, securing reliable food supplies in times of emergency, and strengthening the role of governments to intervene in markets as needed to achieve food sufficiency. Farmer-owned and publicly managed reserves can also be utilised as a tool to help develop local or regional markets, or to compensate for shortfalls in foreign currency reserves.

Heads of State are called on to follow up proposals for food reserves with concrete action on the national and international level, based on two specific recommendations:

- 1) ***Mandate a stronger role for the UN Committee on Food Security*** - to develop proposals with the UN World Food Programme for a system of global humanitarian food reserves. In addition, the Committee on Food Security should lead a review commission to assess how a coordinated approach to reserves could limit price volatility.
- 2) ***Increase investment in developing countries*** - to achieve culturally appropriate local and regional reserves. As donor governments seek to mobilize investment to strengthen national food security plans, food reserves should be a central plank of their foreign assistance agenda.

Robin Willoughby, policy officer at Share the World’s Resources (STWR) stated:

“Governments meeting in Rome urgently need to take a new direction in food and agriculture to address the failed policies of recent decades.”

“Initiating a system of food reserves could be the first critical step toward a genuine form of multilateral cooperation to end hunger.”

Organizations supporting the letter include the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) USA, Share The World's Resources (STWR) UK, ActionAid Senegal, Asociacion Nacional de Empresas Comercializadoras de Productores del Campo, AC (ANEC) Mexico, Asian Farmers' Association Philippines, National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) USA, Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de L'Afrique de L'Ouest (ROPPA) West Africa, Global Policy Forum USA, World Hunger Year USA, Collectif Stratégies Alimentaires Belgium, Food & Water Watch USA and the Soy Alliance UK.

**Contact:**

Adam Parsons, STWR (UK), adam@stwr.org, +44 (0)20 7609-3034  
Ben Lilliston, IATP (Minneapolis, USA), ben@iatp.org, 612-870-3416

**Notes to the editors:**

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. To find out more about a public briefing on food reserves held in Washington on 15 October 2009 or to read IATP's report, 'Strategic Grain Reserves in an Era of Volatility' by Sophia Murphy, visit [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org).

Share The World's Resources (STWR) advocates for governments to secure basic human needs by sharing essential resources such as water, energy and staple food. Further information on STWR's policy brief on food reserves, 'Global Food Reserves: Framing the Context for a New Multilateralism', can be found at [www.stwr.org](http://www.stwr.org).