

Brussels, 30 March 2009

EU €1 billion "Food Facility" for developing countries – Commission adopts overall plan and first implementation decision

Today the European Commission adopted a € 314 million package of projects to support agriculture and improve the food security situation in 23 developing countries across the globe. This is the first financing decision in the framework of the € 1 billion Food Facility which was adopted at the end of last year as a response to the growing food security problems faced by many developing countries. The Commission also agreed to an overall plan for the use of the entire amount of the Facility, targeting 50 developing countries in total.

Louis Michel, Commissioner responsible for Development and Humanitarian Aid, said: "Europe has already made humanitarian responses to the food crisis through emergency aid. The "Food Facility" is the development response - €1 billion over 3 years to get agriculture back on its feet. The package adopted today targets the 23 countries worst hit. This is a response to the food crisis which is already hitting developing countries. Over the months ahead, we must not forget the impact that the financial crisis and economic downturn will have on developing countries - this is only now becoming clear and could be much worse than expected. Europe is quite rightly focused on recovery plans for our own economy. That should not in any way diminish our commitment to developing countries - as decisions like this one taken today clearly show."

Background:

On 18 December 2008, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a Regulation establishing the € 1 billion 'Food Facility', which constitutes the main EU response to the worsening global food security situation in 2007/08. Today's financing decision as well as the overall plan for the Food Facility have both also been approved by the European Parliament and all EU Member States.

Addressing the period in-between emergency aid and medium - to long-term development cooperation, the Food Facility will operate for a period of 3 years (2009-2011). Three types of activities will be supported:

- measures to improve access to agricultural inputs like fertilizers and seeds and services like vets and advisors;
- other small-scale measures aiming at increasing agricultural production like microcredit, rural infrastructure, training and support to professional groups in the agricultural sector; and
- safety net measures, allowing for social transfers to vulnerable population groups, often in the form of labour-intensive public works (roads, irrigation projects etc).

The current financing decision by the Commission provides support to projects and programmes in 23 developing countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burma/Myanmar, Burundi, Central African Republic, DR Congo, Cuba, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. The full text of the decision including allocations by country will be available at the link below.

All funding of the projects adopted today will be channelled through International Organisations: the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and specialised UN agencies like UNOPS (in Myanmar/Burma) and UNRWA (in Palestine).

The overall plan for the implementation of the Food Facility contains a list of 50 target countries which will receive assistance during a three year period. Support will be provided through International Organisations, Regional Organisations and national governments as well as a Call for Proposals for activities by Non-States Actors, Member States bodies and other eligible implementing actors.

The Commission Decision underlines the importance of the European Union as the worlds' principal partner in improving food security across the globe. The projects to be funded will impact positively on the lives of millions of the poorest people in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

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