

Jacques Diouf

Dr. Jacques Diouf is Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organization, a post he has held since 1994. Born in Saint-Louis, Senegal, Dr. Diouf graduated from Sorbonne University in Paris, France, with a PhD in social sciences of the rural sector. The first decade of his career was spent as Executive Secretary for the African Groundnut Council in Nigeria and the West Africa Rice Development Association of Liberia before going on to being elected as Secretary of State for Science and Technology in Dakar, Senegal. During the mid-1980s, he was Secretary-General of the Central Bank for West African States in Senegal and went on to accept the position of Ambassador of the Senegalese Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. Dr. Jacques Diouf has been a board member for many organizations, including the International Agricultural Centres in Nairobi, Kenya, The Hague, the Netherlands, and Lagos, Nigeria, and the International Foundation for Science, Stockholm, Sweden. Additionally, he has received more than 35 decorations and 19 academic honours.



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“FAO welcomes and supports the elaboration of new ISO standards.”

ISO Focus: Dr. Diouf, before we turn our attention to International Standards, can you please describe the mission of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Jacques Diouf: FAO’s mandate, which is written into the Preamble of its Constitution, is to free humanity from hunger. Food security for all lies at the heart of our concerns.

FAO provides a neutral forum where countries can meet on an equal footing to negotiate agreements, debate agricultural policies, and identify solutions to common problems.

FAO is at the service of all its member nations, and more particularly, assists the developing countries and economies in transition to modernize and improve their agricultural, forestry and fishery practices, safeguard the environment, and provide their people with access to an adequate and balanced diet. It is also a source of knowledge and technical information.

Ever since it was established in 1945, FAO has paid special attention to developing the rural regions which are home to seventy-five per cent of the poor and malnourished populations.

In cooperation with other United Nations agencies and other development partners, FAO is working to

achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the first one: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Today, there are 852 million people who are still suffering from hunger, over 200 million of which live in sub-Saharan Africa. But without a rapid reduction in hunger it will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the other Millennium Development Goals.

To achieve food security, information must be brought within everyone’s reach so that it can help the application of know-how in the field and encourage the transfer of technology and expertise, particularly in relation to agricultural policy.

FAO’s technical assistance thereby helps to raise agricultural yields using simple and sustainable techniques and tools. It also helps countries to recover after natural or man caused disasters



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and to combat drought as well as animal and plant pests and diseases, such as locusts or avian influenza, just to give recent examples.

ISO Focus: What are the main priorities for the FAO today?

Jacques Diouf: Cross-boundary animal diseases, such as avian flu, will remain one of FAO's paramount concerns in 2006, but the main thrusts of FAO's work continue to be to free humanity from hunger and poverty.

These entail taking tangible steps to achieve the World Food Summit target and the Millennium Development Goals, ensuring the sustainable and responsible management of land, water, forests, fisheries and biodiversity and promoting food production methods and consumption patterns to guarantee adequate and healthy nutrition.

Other priorities include the need to advocate strongly for an appropriate level of investment in plant, animal and fish production, particularly in sound land and water management, and in rural infrastructure in developing countries and to promote international cooperation, including South-South cooperation.

(Top) Low-tech solutions with big results. The use of treadle pumps can increase crop yields several fold per year as more crop cycles are possible than when depending on rain-fed cultivation. FAO promotes agricultural practices that raise agricultural yields using simple and sustainable techniques and tools.

(Above) Convinced that dialogue between developing countries facing similar food and agriculture problems makes perfect sense, FAO promotes South-South cooperation through its Partnership Programme whereby expertise and technologies are shared that result in the transfer of many solutions suited to local conditions.

(Right) FAO helps countries to combat drought, locusts, avian influenza, or to recover from natural or man-made disasters. For example, in the case of transboundary animal diseases such as the avian influenza, FAO provides technical assistance and advice; laboratory equipment, protective clothing and training; coordination between agencies and donors; plus technical information, guidelines, contingency planning and public advocacy.



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ISO Focus: *The Codex Alimentarius Commission, the body jointly established by the FAO and the World Health Organization, has worked closely with ISO in the development of standards to ensure safe food throughout the supply chain (ISO 22000). What benefits do you see here in terms of food safety and trade?*

Jacques Diouf: The Codex Alimentarius Commission sets international standards for use by governments, while ISO develops standards primarily for application by industry. Codex standards should be such that the health of consumers is adequately protected, but they should not be overly prescriptive in order not to constitute unnecessary barriers to trade.

Despite the differences in the objectives of Codex and ISO, as well as in the standards they produce, there is scope for synergy between public and private standards internationally.

As an example, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point

(HACCP) System is a food safety management tool recommended by Codex. The compliance with ISO 22000 will assist in promoting the use of HACCP worldwide. It is definitely in the interest of consumers and other interested parties that public and private standards do not provide conflicting or inconsistent advice. Codex and ISO have other areas of mutual interest, such as methods of analysis and sampling, products certification and food traceability.

ISO Focus: *FAO participates in numerous ISO technical committees, among them food products as well as tractors and machinery for agriculture and forestry. Can you please comment on the benefits of participation in the ISO standards-making process?*

“Enhanced cooperation will facilitate the collaboration in standards-setting at the international level.”

Jacques Diouf: Indeed, FAO participates in, and has liaison status with, numerous ISO technical committees. For instance, the Joint FAO/IAEA Division, through its Animal Production and Health Section, recently collaborated with ISO in the development of a laboratory quality assurance manual that was eventually published by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). The Manual, which is based on ISO/IEC 17025, *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*, is intended to assist both FAO and IAEA developing countries in obtaining laboratory accreditation. This is a good example of the benefits of participation in the ISO standard development process.

The IAEA also participates in this process in areas such as nuclear energy, air quality or water quality.

In yet another area, as you have mentioned, FAO has been collaborating closely with ISO technical committee ISO/TC 23, *Tractors and machinery for agriculture and forestry*, subcommittee SC 6, *Equipment for crop protection*, as



View of the Plenary Hall during the World Food Summit held at FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy. FAO provides a neutral forum where countries can meet on an equal footing to negotiate agreements and debate agricultural policies.



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(Left) To achieve food security, information must be brought within everyone's reach, to implement know-how in the field and encourage the transfer of technology and expertise, particularly in relation to agricultural policy. FAO's technical assistance thereby helps raise agricultural yields using simple and sustainable techniques and tools.

(Below) Atrium view of UN flag at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters, Rome, Italy.



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an A level liaison member. FAO staff is actively participating, as technical resource persons, in ISO work for the development of pesticide sprayer standards and guidelines for good application practice. In this way, the FAO guidelines as found in the FAO Code of Conduct on distribution and use of pesticides, which has been endorsed by FAO members, can be reflected in the development of new ISO standards. Direct results of this collaboration are the standards for knapsack sprayers (ISO 19932-1 and -2).

This work contributes directly to a reduction of pesticide hazards and is of high relevance for the increased attention paid internationally to good application practice procedures. It also contributes to improving food safety according to HACCP. The knapsack sprayer manufacturing industry worldwide has become aware about safety issues for sprayers and several FAO member countries have taken up this issue. The fact that an ISO standard has been developed is a strong incentive to improve equipment quality and safety, especially for the manufacturing industry, but it also provides member countries with internationally agreed standards to support their own legislation for the reduction of pesticide hazards. FAO is following with interest the work of the advisory group on application techniques of TC 23/SC 6, including assessment of the feasibility of internationally agreeable guidelines for aspects of good practice in pesticide application.

Hence, there is already a number of areas of active collaboration between FAO and ISO, with important real and potential benefits. But we need to bear in mind that the context in which the two

organizations work in developing these standards is somewhat different. FAO is an inter-governmental organization and its membership consists of governments (this also applies to Codex). On the other side, ISO – a non-governmental organization – is a network of national standards institutes of 156 countries, on the basis of one per country. I believe that enhanced cooperation and coordination as well as information exchange at the country level will facilitate the collaboration in standards-setting at the international level.

ISO Focus: *What new International Standards would FAO like to see coming out of ISO? Are there specific areas you would like us to concentrate on?*

Jacques Diouf: So far, there have been few internationally agreed standards describing safe pesticide sprayers – with the exception of the above-mentioned knapsack sprayer standards. With

increased awareness about the importance of safe equipment for reducing pesticide hazards, ISO standards for other types of pesticide sprayers would be welcome. At the European level, with the introduction of the EU Thematic Strategy on Sustainable Use of Pesticides, such standards will be in demand for Europe. FAO would also welcome ISO's participation in the development of such standards for the benefit of non-European countries.

FAO welcomes and supports the elaboration of new ISO standards when necessary. But it is important to note that these standards should not deviate from other internationally recognized standards such as Codex. This, for example, should be considered in relation to the articles of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Agreement regarding harmonization. ■