

The diverse measures envisaged to alleviate the problems I have pointed out and other similar ones, such as the effects on wildlife habitats and on the marine resources, should incorporate reduced fertilizer application in developed countries, as well as the rational use of fertilizers in both developed and developing ones. Fertigation, that is the combined fertilization with the irrigation water associated with soil and plant testing, is an issue to be thoroughly covered in the Congress and constitutes a most powerful means for the efficient and rational use of fertilizers.

Needless to say, other measures, such as the proper application of fertilizers at the times and rates absolutely required, conservation plans, as well as low-input agriculture, can also play a significant role. I also note with satisfaction that you have included in your Agenda, a special topic emphasizing the unique role of fertilization and manuring in agroforestry and reforestation as renewable resources for non-food production. As the primary beneficiaries of such a policy would be the human population of the planet, it is necessary to further strengthen our efforts in this direction.

People involved in the production, research and use of fertilizers should be at the forefront of such global efforts for the rational and efficient use of fertilizers. Increasing food production and upgrading its quality through the prudent use of fertilizers are the immediate objectives. Considering the unacceptable nutritional conditions in many developing countries, where hunger and malnutrition continue to plague immense numbers of our fellow human beings, such an objective is widely accepted. The ultimate and longlasting target, however, is sustainable agriculture through minimizing its environmental impacts by, among others, the rational use of fertilizers. This long-term objective, that is increased efficiency of fertilizer use and improved management of land and water resources on a degradation - free and sustainable basis is, and rightly so, the theme of the Congress.

I am confident that such considerations prevail among scientists and politicians, all around the world. It is not coincidental that the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, in celebrating last week the 10th anniversary of the World Food Day, has chosen "Food for the Future" as the special theme of the Day. This issue is directly linked with the "Food and the Environment" which was the one for the celebration of last year's anniversary. They both contain the vital concept of an inter and intra-generational responsibility, are in line with the objectives of the present Congress.

The core message I would like to deliver to the Congress, is that the policies to achieve sustainability in agriculture and other activities should blend their goals with those of the policies for the protection of the environment. It is the only way to maintain the health and vitality of the ecosystems on which agriculture relies and to sustain life in our countries, in our planet.

As far as Cyprus is concerned, may I assure you that we are particularly sensitive in all aspects of the entire spectrum of the issue, in raising food production and increasing soil productivity whilst simultaneously protecting our environment.