

Remarks by Tony Nowell to APEC Food Security Ministerial Meeting
May 29 2012

PPFS intervention at Food Ministerial:

- Despite some nervous, tentative, bumpy moments, APEC has this week made an historic step forward here in Kazan.
- For ABAC the inauguration of the Policy Partnership on Food Security is a dream 13 years in the making. As our Chair Sergey Aleksashenko commented: “All of us have become participants in an experiment – political leaders of the APEC economies have (for the first time) decided to listen to the opinion of the business community [on the issue of food security].”
- ABAC remains committed to staying closely involved in the development of this important new body, and remain confident that this unique “joint venture” between public and private sector can ensure the PPFS achieves its stated mission – “the attainment of a food system structure by 2020 sufficient to provide lasting food security to APEC member economies”.
- Within these four walls, we can admit with brutal honesty that our inauguration was a faltering one: the absence of a clearly structured agenda and supporting documents ahead of the meeting was a hindrance to members making a full contribution; the decision not to review our terms of reference, and the understandings reached at the Management Council in Moscow in February, left many members uncertain on how best to launch forward.
- But those who were frustrated or impatient with this, need to remind themselves of how we are moving into uncharted territory. This has been a big leap for Government officials in many APEC economies – not just to bring business leaders

around the table, but to open up a subject that for many has been taboo for decades – trade liberalisation in the farm sector.

- And despite this faltering start, some fascinating presentations were tabled, and some potentially important outcomes were outlined.
- The audit of food policies in the region provided two important and sobering insights: first, a total of 12 APEC economies seek self sufficiency and food independence, rather than wanting to rely on open markets for trade in food products. In short, a majority of APEC members are still inclined to protectionism in farm trade. Second, few governments are yet addressing the critically important issues of post-harvest food waste or fisheries and aquaculture. For ABAC, the issue of post-harvest food waste is perhaps the single clearest concern for ABAC and the business sector.
- The presentation from PPFS Hong Kong member calling for region-wide collaboration on application of global standards applying to bar codes and RFID identification – as a means of creating more efficient, safer and sustainable value chains – struck a powerful chord with many officials around the table and triggered a large amount of follow up conversation. Here was a practical business-based proposal that offers huge value in food safety and food security to all member economies – improving food supply-chain visibility both in domestic markets and for internationally traded food, enhancing traceability and recall of unsafe foods, reducing costs and driving supply chain efficiency, building consumer confidence in food products, and contributing to strong economic growth. Their ideas are likely to be taken further, and it is our hope that these are the sort of distinctive contributions from the private sector that can add value for APEC economies through this unique new APEC institution.
- Having successfully launched on Tuesday, the key challenge must now surely be to define where we best go from here. After battling for more than a decade to

establish this unprecedented group, ABAC members obviously have a powerful interest in ensuring it makes an effective contribution. I think two priority focus areas emerged from Tuesday's discussion:

- First, we need to tackle “post harvest food loss” – and how to reduce losses along the food chain “from farm to fork”. Maybe ABAC itself needs to champion this.
 - Second, we need to develop our infrastructure – not just infrastructure hardware, but software like logistics and supply chain connectivity.
 - Chair Sergey Aleksashenko emphasised two other challenges that should be prioritised – food quality and safety, and how to secure sustainable growth in production.
 - He is calling for members to feed back to him by June 5 so he and the Management Council can propose an action plan, and I am confident all of us will leave Kazan determined to meet his tight deadline.
- Beyond this, a key challenge will be how to sustain momentum. It seems the PPFS will now not meet until SOM2 in 2013 – which is a full year from now. I see at least four things we can do to keep the ball rolling:
 1. ABAC will use ABAC3 in Ho Chi Minh to agree an ABAC strategy on Food Security, and make sure this gets into our letter to leaders, and is discussed in Vladivostok in September
 2. We need to make sure that those existing APEC Working Groups dedicated to food-related issues take up relevant initiatives and take them forward.
 3. We should encourage the creation of small PPFS “task forces”, perhaps championed on a pathfinder basis by a small group of member economies, to drive forward on agreed priority issues.
 4. ABAC will also draw on its existing working groups structure to identify and prioritise food security-related initiatives linked with their work. As Chair of ABAC's Regional Economic Integration Working Group, I have already invited Sergey Aleksashenko to write to the ABAC Chair asking for us to do this.

- So despite some fraying of nerves, I think this was quite an exciting start. The PPFS carries a heavy responsibility to achieve our goal of sustainable food security by 2020, and I can assure you that ABAC stands ready to make a significant contribution to make sure we succeed.