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PRESS RELEASE

World Health Organisation-Agri-food Industry Consultation

WHO Recommendations on Diet and Health are “Unbalanced” says World Farmer Leader

Geneva, 17 June 2003 – Farmers criticised the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) draft Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health for being “unbalanced”. Speaking at an industry consultation on the draft strategy, the President of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), Mr. Jack Wilkinson (Canada), said “Every food plays a role in a balanced, healthy diet. WHO is wrong to put forward the idea of ‘good foods’ versus ‘bad foods’, with fruits and vegetables being ‘good’ and meat, dairy and sugar products being ‘bad’”. “Instead, said Wilkinson, WHO should be emphasizing that a balanced diet is necessary for health, and that energy intake should be balanced with adequate physical activity”.

Farmer representatives recognised that in many countries, unbalanced diets and lack of physical activity is a growing health problem. However, they were not convinced that the WHO was basing its global strategy on the best science available. For example, consumption of dairy products should be recommended against osteoporosis.

There are too many conflicting messages on diet and health, and farmers and other industry representatives called upon WHO to bring together the different national strategies in this areas and develop clear consensus guidelines e.g. on nutrient labelling, consumer education and information, and the importance of physical activity in schools. Also, this strategy of WHO should not undermine critical work on eliminating hunger in the world.

A new draft of the WHO Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health will be available in October/November 2003, and this will be examined by the WHO Executive Board in January 2004.

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IFAP is the world farmers’ organisation representing over 500 million farm families grouped in 100 national organisations in 71 countries. Founded in 1946, IFAP has a General Consultative Status with United Nations.

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