



MOSTAFA TERRAB

Chairman & CEO of OCP Group

Introduction

Let me welcome you to this session. I feel I am among many friends and recognise many faces. We have a very distinguished panel, but I will put that word in quotes, because what we are interested in here is having a more interactive and open exchange, given that many of the experts are also outside the panel. Therefore, given the format of this room and what we are doing here, I think it is better to view this as an exchange around the topic of food security.

However, let me introduce the panellists, though this is hard to do given their distinguished careers. Dr. Louise Fresco is a professor at the University of Amsterdam and had a long and distinguished career that took her to positions like the FAO and places like that, and is recognised as one of the foremost experts in agriculture and sustainability. Professor Thorat is the President of the Rajiv Gandhi Trust in India, and has also had a distinguished career in central banking as the director of the Central Bank of India; he is also an expert in agriculture, and I am very happy to have him here.

Jean-Yves Carfantan, simply asked me to introduce him as a Brazilian who is interested in agriculture. Finally, Dr. Qu Xing from the Chinese Institute for International Affairs will obviously give us a Chinese perspective on the issue. There are other experts I will ask to introduce themselves when they speak.

I will not say anything of substance except that the challenge is that we will need to feed nine billion people in less than 40 years, in 2050, with an area of arable land that is reaching its limits, and that has challenged many experts, whether from the policy, science, economic or financial perspective. This is indeed a question where one has to bring different perspectives, but the difficulty is also to synthesise these into something intelligible, to distinguish the wood from the trees.

The issue has had a lot of prominence on the international agenda, whether the G20, the UN or other institutions, and I am glad my former institution, the World Bank, after 30 years of silence, became more interested in agriculture five years ago, but it is telling that for 30 years an institution like the World Bank did not have any agricultural programme to speak of. However, I think it remains a very fuzzy and almost intractable issue, so I do not know anyone better placed than Louise to help us make sense of the multifaceted aspects of this issue. Without further ado I will give her the floor.