

Food scarcity and rising food prices endanger the position of women

Mr Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen,

Women around the world, including in the Netherlands, are concerned about rising food prices and food scarcity. They are concerned about the effect on their standard of living and well-being. They are concerned about the effect on their immediate environment. And they are concerned about the effect on their own economic and social position.

The causes of rising food prices are being extensively discussed at local, national, and international level. We all know that the causes are complex. They include climate change,

plant diseases, the neglect of family farming, and the overuse of fertilizers and pesticides.

while the world's food stocks have been shrinking, food consumption has been growing and food consumption patterns have been changing – especially in countries with emerging economies.

1. Since October of last year, there have been food riots in forty countries, causing instability and increasing the likelihood of political unrest and migration. Kofi Annan warned that food scarcity and hunger could cause serious social instability. He said that governments would be

deposed and that the crisis...

Mr Chairperson,

When food scarcity causes instability, unrest and migration, women are the first to suffer. An important basis for achieving equal rights for women is a stable infrastructure: good governance, including protection of human rights, a stable economy, and access to basic amenities. The food crisis has destabilised this basis.

Food is a basic necessity, and governments need to do their best to make sure people have access to it. Food scarcity and rising food prices maintain or increase inequality between men and women. For this reason, I would ask you all to devote more attention to women and girls when developing national and international policies on food production.

Thank you.

Hester Maij

Dutch women's representative to the UN General Assembly 2008