Food Security – Seeking Solutions

by Kathy Mathers

March 8, 2015

Fertilizer News

After serving for two days as a delegate to the Global Food Security Forum in Rabat, Morocco, I am more convinced than ever of the complexity of the problems surrounding feeding the world’s hungry and undernourished people.

While the food security problem is daunting, it is heartening to see the genuine interest in seeking a solution from an incredibly diverse group of people. Here in Rabat we have high level government officials, scientists, representatives of the private sector and NGO’s who have all set aside three days to work with others to address food security issues.

We spent the majority of our day yesterday in plenary sessions on meeting the challenges of food security; markets volatility and food security and policy, geopolitics and food security. Today, we were assigned to work in smaller groups designed to identify and find solutions to key issues. I was assigned to the “At the National Level” work group.

This work was not easy! First of all, while English is the official language of the conference, many delegates are much more comfortable conversing in French. This was a bit of a challenge, but not a barrier to a very productive afternoon. I was reminded that I really should have paid more attention in my high school French class.

My group had much discussion about the need to empower smallholder farmers, giving them access to agronomic information as well as the markets in which they can sell their goods. No matter what the problem, farmers are at the root of the solution – the challenge the world faces is ensuring they have the tools they need, not only to be profitable, but also to feed their global neighbors.

Back in the United States, we are constantly trying to promote the social, environmental and economic value of fertilizer. Here it was not only a given, but on front and center stage. It is clear that our industry and
its products are greatly valued for their role in the world’s food production system. I also found it interesting that we discussed not just malnourishment, but also the problem of undernourishment – where people may get enough calories, but those calories do not contain adequate nutrients. Again, an area where fertilizers should be part of the solution.

Tomorrow, we will pick up where we left off today and our group will report to the entire delegation on our progress and recommendations. We have been encouraged to “think big” in our brainstorming – already there appears to be momentum and energy for continuing the work that started this week here in Rabat.