ON behalf of the U.S., Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer went to the meeting with a three-pronged approach to provide immediate humanitarian needs, look at the long-term infrastructure needs of increasing yields to boost production and work to eliminate barriers and export restrictions that block the free flow of food trade.

During the conference, biofuels surfaced as a controversial topic between countries that produce biofuels and those that don’t. Brazil and the U.S. debated which crop is best suited for conversion, while others debated the role of biofuels in driving up food prices.

The final declaration stated that “in-depth studies” were necessary to ensure that the environmentally friendly energy source doesn’t take food off the table and recognized some of the challenges and opportunities of biofuels.

Schafer welcomed the conference attendees’ final declaration on biofuels and said the U.S. remains committed to the “sustainable production and use of biofuels, both domestically and globally.”

He added that his time at the conference made him “more confident that our ethanol policy of energy security, but are not a primary focus for the company. Monsanto’s research pipeline includes new corn, soybean and cotton products that will result in more production per unit of land and reduced use of energy, fertilizer and water per unit produced. The company said it will track the progress of its products toward the goal of reducing by one-third the cumulative amount of key resources used in agricultural food, water and energy required per unit of output by 2030. It will also join with others to address habitat loss and water quality in agricultural important areas.

Monsanto said it will help improve the lives of farmers, including an additional 5 million people in resource-poor farm families, 141 million people in the fight against hunger, and help alleviate poverty and hunger.

Monsanto outlined four long-term solutions to increase productivity and help alleviate poverty and hunger:

1. Encourage research and the dissemination of technologies and techniques for sustainable agriculture and water management.
2. Deliver extension and agronomy programming at a local level to ensure that productivity increases are sustainable. The benefits of investing in research and innovation can only be realized if the technologies can be adequately disseminated.
3. Increase stewardship training in agricultural best practices at the local level.
4. Establish secure land tenure, and recognize women as land owners.

—Iby JACQUI FATKA