



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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9th Forum for the Future of Agriculture

“SDGs: Transforming the agricultural model; what needs to change and what are the solutions”

Speech by FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva

Distinguished Guests and Participants;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is a pleasure to come to Brussels to participate in this edition of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture, in order to discuss changes and solutions for agriculture in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs.
2. The first thing I would like to highlight is that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs present a comprehensive and transformative vision of development that reflects the deepest aspirations of humanity for a world that is fair, safer, more inclusive and more peaceful.
3. The SDGs are universal. Every country has responsibilities and targets to achieve. They are based on integrative thinking and are designed to foster innovation.
4. The SDGs are interlinked and call for new combinations in the way policies, programmes, partnerships and investments should pull together to achieve common goals and produce the most needed public goods.
5. This is the way to achieve the SDGs, particularly the first two global goals of ending poverty and hunger by 2030, which are linked objectives.
6. In the world today, nearly 80 percent of the extreme poor and undernourished people live in rural areas. Most of them are family farmers who grow food, but not enough to avoid hunger or escape extreme poverty.
7. At the same time, the largest proportion of the food we eat every day is also produced by family farmers. So family farmers in general are key actors in achieving food security for all.

8. In this sense, it is essential to invest and create new products, technologies, processes and friendlier business models to support them, improve their resilience and enable them to produce more in a sustainable way.
9. These new products and technological tools should be elaborated based on their interests and needs, in order to promote inclusiveness, availability and accessibility.
10. To facilitate this task, family farmers should be encouraged to organize themselves at local, national and regional levels. This would not only help to obtain information from them in order to develop tailored products and technologies, but also to enable them to use the tools available.
11. Let me emphasize this point: organization is fundamental for poor family farmers to thrive. We cannot expect them to be able to face all the challenges ahead in their current conditions.
12. So governmental policies and actions to improve the sustainable productivity of family farmers must also include investments in rural infrastructure and social protection, in order to provide the necessary inputs for production, to enhance incomes and to connect them to markets.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. Much is said about improving the productivity of agriculture to feed a growing population in the next decades. But more important than that, at this point in time, is to rethink and transform our food systems.
14. One in nine people are still undernourished although we have more than enough food available to feed the planet. It is a problem of accessibility. Furthermore, over 2 billion people are overweight, including 500 million of whom are obese.
15. It is clear that we need to implement transformative changes to tackle this situation.
16. We need to strengthen food value chains and ensure a nutrition-sensitive approach to produce more nutritious food and healthy diets. There is a need to improve the whole value chain, from the farm to consumers' table.
17. This is one of the main recommendations that emerged from of the Second International Conference on Nutrition, the ICN2, that was held in Rome in 2014.
18. Consumers need help to have the opportunity to make better dietary choices. Business can help ensure that everyone has access to a variety of nutritious

and healthy foods, for example by providing information to consumers and enabling them to make healthy dietary choices.

19. Comprehensive label information is a very important tool for this purpose. Propaganda control and nutritional education are others.
20. We must also reduce post-harvest food losses and waste. FAO has been promoting the SAVE FOOD initiative, which aims at encouraging dialogue among industry, research, politics, and civil society. Private sector participation is of the utmost importance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. Another important aspect regarding changes and solutions for agriculture is to combat the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.
22. Climate change is causing droughts and floods that increase in frequency and intensity.
23. It is undermining the health of soils, forests and oceans on which agriculture and food security depend.
24. Poor family farmers are driven off their land by prolonged drought.
25. Coastal fishing communities are losing their homes because of rising sea levels.
26. Pastoralists are forced to migrate in search of land on which their cattle can graze.
27. The rural poor are the most exposed to these threats, and they are the least equipped to deal with them.
28. At the same time, agriculture is responsible for almost one quarter of global man made greenhouse gas emissions.
29. So it is clear that we have to implement measures to promote both adaptation and mitigation.
30. FAO has been investing in areas that have significant potential to improve, at the same time, food security, adaptation and mitigation.
31. In fact, as we adapt, based on environmentally friendly techniques, we are also mitigating the effects of climate change.
32. This is the case of the Global Soil Partnership, which is aimed at mobilizing the resources needed to reverse soil degradation and support effective soil conservation measures.

33. Livestock is also fundamental. The initiative called Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock builds consensus on the path towards sustainability.

Ladies and gentlemen,

34. Climate change is creating a situation that we call the “new normality”, in which it is very difficult to foresee the challenges ahead in order to provide food security and improved nutrition for all.
35. And we will continue to face unpredictable and unexpected scenarios, such as the emergence of the Zika virus in the health sector.
36. In this context, we must count on a broad portfolio of tools and approaches to eradicate hunger, fight every form of malnutrition and achieve sustainable agriculture.
37. As a neutral forum, FAO has been promoting debates, dialogues and exchange of information in order to enhance our knowledge of these tools and approaches.
38. We held an international symposium on agroecology in 2014. We helped launch the Global Alliance on Climate Smart Agriculture in the same year.
39. We have released a new edition of “Save and Grow in Practice”, FAO’s model of ecosystem-based agriculture.
40. And last month, we organized a symposium on agricultural biotechnologies, to raise awareness and promote dialogue on the benefits of applying biotechnology in the agricultural sectors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

41. Before concluding, two last comments.
42. First, there is an urgent need to incorporate civil society and private sector organizations in the national plans to achieve the SDGs. In the same way, it is fundamental for countries to have internal mechanisms of governance that goes beyond the traditional divide between sectoral ministries, such as agriculture, health, education and others.
43. This ministerial policy coordination mechanism would put together relevant governmental sectors, civil society and the private sector. In addition, it would be important to have a sort of parallel structure of clusters for each SDG that is defined as a priority by each country.

44. Second: there is an urgent need to improve national capacity in terms of data and statistics, in order to help define a base line and a monitoring process for the SDGs, based on what each country defines as a priority.
45. Finally, let me clarify why I am referring to national priorities for SDGs. This is clear to me that it will not be possible for all countries to give the same priority to all of the SDGs. Countries must prioritize their own targets and implement the necessary mechanisms to monitor their priorities.
46. Although all the 17 SDGs are interlinked and reinforce one another, it will be impossible to operationalize all of them simultaneously from the beginning.
47. Perhaps if countries succeed in defining their priorities, they will later be able to develop a more comprehensive approach to achieve all the SDGs.
48. FAO's mandate is directly linked to at least 14 of the 17 SDGs. The Organization is ready to support countries to implement such measures to achieve them. No one must be left behind.

Thank you very much for your attention