



**Keynote Speech by Mari Kiviniemi
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10th Forum for the Future of Agriculture

28 March, Brussels, Belgium

[Session 1: The impact of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals on policy-making](#)

- Minister Guy, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- It is my pleasure and honour to be invited to speak at the **10th Forum for the Future of Agriculture about the impact of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** on policy-making. This is a topic that is central to OECD efforts towards designing “better policies for better lives”. And I am very thankful to the organisers for having given me the opportunity.
- Yet this opportunity invites modesty, given the distance we still need to travel before we are able to collectively say “**we have arrived: we fulfilled the SDGs**”.
- Current events unfolding in the Horn of Africa serve as a powerful reminder that the distance to travel is great indeed.
- The FAO estimates¹ that close to 12 million people across Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya are presently in dire need of food assistance. This is also as widespread drought conditions, exacerbated by conflict in some areas, have

¹ www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/468941/icode/

intensified in past months. And unmitigated climate change will only make such catastrophes more likely as the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events increases.

- To be sure, concerns about **poverty, food security or climate change** predate the adoption of the SDGs by the UN.
- But what the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides is a useful universal framework to strengthen collective action towards a common set of objectives. As well as help avoid disasters of the kind that is happening in Eastern Africa at the moment.
- The OECD, which I am representing today, has a long history of engagement with major UN processes on human development and well-being, financing for development, environmental sustainability, and climate change.
- We are in fact no stranger to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we have contributed to shaping early on, and which we continue supporting by leveraging our capacity and expertise.

- This support is currently reflected in “Better Policies for 2030”, the Action Plan on SDGs that the OECD Council endorsed in December 2016². It sets out our contribution to helping countries achieve the 2030 Agenda by way of four areas for future action.
- Let me concentrate here on two of these areas as they relate to **agriculture, fisheries, and climate change**:

Action area 1: Applying an SDG lens to the OECD’s strategies and policy tools

- The **first** action area is, applying an SDG lens to the OECD’s strategies and policy tools.
- The SDGs constitute an important part of the “backdrop” against which much of the OECD’s work takes place. Significant efforts have been made to integrate SDG perspectives across the advice we give to governments.

²

www.oecd.org/dac/Better%20Policies%20for%202030.pdf

- The 2016 edition of our annual *OECD Agricultural Policy Monitoring and Evaluation* report thus underscores the close connections that exist between agriculture and rural development, and the alleviation of **poverty, hunger, and malnutrition** worldwide.
- This helps to show that the majority of the SDGs are either directly or indirectly **relevant for agriculture and agricultural policies.**
- The second SDG, which calls to **end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture,** is especially important in that regard.
- Key to achieving **food security** - while promoting sustainable agriculture - is for countries to shift away from agricultural and food policies that are production and trade-distorting.
- Instead they should move towards measures that improve **farm resilience, productivity, and sustainability.**

- In practice this can mean three things. **Firstly**, correcting the international-trade restrictions that prevent countries from fully participating in agricultural and food global value chains.
- **Secondly**, increasing investment in agricultural research and innovation systems.
- **Thirdly**, encouraging farmers to adopt climate-friendly practices and use natural resources like water more sustainably.
- Those are some of the SDG-relevant lessons, that we are able to draw from the framework that the OECD uses to evaluate the extent to which policy settings are conducive to sustainable productivity growth.
- The *Agricultural Outlook* that we release annually in collaboration with the FAO has likewise been used to assess which countries are on **trend to meet the SDG objective of eliminating hunger**.

- Increasing **food availability** is thus projected to reduce the global prevalence of undernourishment from 11% to 8% over the next ten years. This is despite population growth adding another **600 million people worldwide**.³
- That decrease appears, however, less marked in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the numbers of the undernourished are set to remain high. Further, the region continues to account for a growing share of the total undernourished worldwide.
- With sufficient food available globally, improved access among the poor therefore appears key to eliminating global hunger.

Action area 2: Leveraging OECD data to help analyse progress in the implementation of the SDGs

- The **second action area** is leveraging OECD data to help analyse progress in the implementation of the SDGs.

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www.oecd.org/tad/policynotes/effect-agricultural-market-developments-global-hunger.pdf

- A core mission of the OECD is to inform decision making through robust evidence and the identification of best practices. And the OECD already holds vast amounts of information – both quantitative and qualitative – that can contribute to SDG follow-up efforts.
- These include efforts to assess countries’ preparedness towards the SDGs. We also examine how countries’ domestic policies help or hinder the achievement of the SDGs globally. Further, we contribute to countries’ strategies to progress on SDG outcomes.
- In the particular case of fisheries, the OECD remains the only global source of authoritative data on support to fisheries. Therefore, we are uniquely placed to contribute to the **SDG 14.6 target of eliminating subsidies to fisheries that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing.**
- Availability of good data takes on particular importance at the moment as efforts towards negotiating a multilateral trade agreement on fisheries subsidies at the WTO have taken on new impetus. All eyes are pointed towards a possible outcome at the **11th Ministerial Conference in December.**

- The data we routinely collect in the context of our OECD country reviews of agricultural policies also provide a wealth of information on progress made on such indicators as the rate of poverty, malnutrition, income inequality, and water stress.
- Both our forthcoming **agricultural policy reviews** for Costa Rica and the Philippines contain a whole chapter on adaptation of agriculture to climate change. These are just some examples that I hope illustrate well the way the OECD is making the SDGs part of its normal policy-advice business.
- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Many challenges are confronting governments as they seek to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The OECD stands ready to help by identifying best policy practices and charting a “path of least resistance” for meeting the SDGs.
- But let me finish by stressing that one thing is certain at this stage.

- ***Isolation does not help***, and a retreat from global trade would seriously compromise attainment of the SDGs and endanger access to secure supplies of food for the poorest.
- Let us remember that openness has contributed to lifting more than a billion people out of poverty in recent decades, with similar impacts on the number of undernourished.⁴
- Thank you for your attention.

⁴ China alone has contributed 72% of the total worldwide drop.