



Press release

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Klößner: “The decision to establish an international Digital Council is a breakthrough!”

In their GFFA final communiqué, the agriculture ministers from 74 countries agreed on a co-ordinated approach for the first time.

On 19th January, **Federal Agriculture Minister Julia Klößner** opened the International Conference of Agriculture Ministers, the highlight of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA). A record number of national delegations and international organisations accepted the federal minister’s invitation this year. Subject of the conference: Global digitalisation in agriculture. Digital technologies can help feed the growing world population more effectively while better conserving our resources.

Federal Agriculture Minister Julia Klößner

“Every human being in the world has a right to food. Because you can’t build a peaceful world on empty stomachs. But there are many conflicting interests: By 2050, we will have to feed more than two billion more people, while our resources are becoming ever scarcer. Digitalisation can help in this regard!

It was impressive to see how much importance the agriculture ministers from across the globe attach to the opportunities and possibilities of digitalisation. We agree on taking steps together to actively promote the possibilities that digitalisation offers us. This will enable us to make agriculture more efficient and more sustainable. And more still: Digitalisation offers people good prospects, strengthens agriculture and rural areas and in this way also combats the cause of migration. We therefore intend to work together to find solutions in order to reduce the so-called digital divide and to improve access to digital technologies - for smallholders across the globe as well. Together with all 74



agriculture ministers present, we agreed in our final communiqué to launch a process for an international framework for digitalisation in agriculture under the auspices of the United Nations. This demonstrates international solidarity, as digitalisation and the flow of goods do not stop at borders.

Firstly: We have proposed that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) should draw up a concept for an International Digital Council. The aim is for this council to advise countries on issues of digitalisation and to drive the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Secondly, the opportunities and risks of digitalisation for agriculture and rural areas are to be weighed up.

And thirdly, we have agreed that the FAO should develop a method in order to measure the degree of digitalisation. We can then make international comparisons on what stage countries and regions have reached in respect of digitalisation, how they have developed and what political, social and economic steps are necessary. We need a digital diagnosis for each and every country. Who is at what stage, are the private-sector activities adequate, or is this sector hindering the bridging of the digital divide, or must the State intervene in a different manner. The aim is to drive digitalisation and to overcome the digital divide.”

The final communiqué by the 74 ministers and 13 international organisations was presented to José Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of the FAO.

Background:

Over the last 50 years, the world population has doubled. During the same period, thanks to technological and organisational innovations as well as conducive agricultural and food policies, global agricultural production has tripled. However, there are still over 821 million people in the world who are suffering from hunger and over 2.5 billion people in total suffering from malnutrition. The global population is also predicted to rise to around 10 billion by the year 2050. At the same time, the natural resources to feed the growing population are limited and agriculture is being confronted by further challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, soil degradation and the loss of biodiversity.

The opportunities offered by innovations and technologies in the digital age are a key factor in ensuring food security. These are, in part, cost-efficient, readily available and can be applied almost anywhere in the world. Today already, digital solutions enable farmers to manage their farms in a way that is more resource-conserving and environmentally-friendly, reduce losses along the value-added chain, increase yields or gain



easier access to counselling services. Nevertheless, there are always unresolved questions regarding the benefits and implications for the environment, industry and society that result from the use of technologies. The agriculture ministers therefore focused on four globally relevant areas:

1. Digital technologies and innovations offer great potential.
2. Farmers need access to these technologies. The technologies must be tailored to the needs of consumers.
3. Data sovereignty and data security must be ensured.
4. Structural changes in rural regions and agriculture must be managed.

The potential of digital technologies was also emphasised by Federal Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel during the GFFA.

Further information on the GFFA and the conference programme is available at:

<https://www.gffa-berlin.de/presseinformation2019-2/>