

Global Forum for Food and Agriculture

Communiqué 2020

Food for All! Trade for Secure, Diverse and Sustainable Nutrition.

We, the agriculture ministers of 71 nations, have assembled here on 18 January 2020 for the 12th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference on the occasion of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA). We have discussed how trade in food and agricultural commodities and trade in services for agriculture can contribute to achieving food security for the world's increasing population, enhancing nutrition and human health, improving farmers' livelihoods and income, and achieving more sustainable food systems to preserve the planet.

We are deeply concerned that currently more than 820 million people suffer from hunger, and 2.5 billion suffer some form of micronutrient deficiency. We should take urgent action to fulfil the right to food and to address the root causes of hunger: extreme poverty, inequality and crisis.

The world's population is growing fast. It is projected to reach nearly 10 billion people by the year 2050.

We are just as concerned that climate change is resulting in yield losses and declines in production in many parts of the world, with these being spread unevenly across regions, and is already affecting global food security and farmers' incomes and is hitting the poor and vulnerable hardest.

The world's natural resources that are fundamental to agricultural production and biodiversity are finite; they are already under great stress and deteriorating over time. Fertile land and water endowments are not equally distributed globally and neither are other means of production, technology, innovations, know-how and capacities to invest.

We underline that the agricultural sector and food systems must produce adequate quantities of safe, nutritious and affordable food and reduce loss and waste to fight world hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, but that it must do so sustainably. We express our

firm conviction that the agricultural and food sector can contribute very significantly to global solutions in all these areas.

Against this background, we emphasise the positive contribution that trade has made to meet the increasing demand for adequate, safe, nutritious and affordable food for consumers as well as to global economic growth and poverty alleviation, and thus to food security, political stability and peace.

Call for Action

We hereby jointly adopt the following resolutions with the aim of promoting the role of agri-food trade in ensuring sustainable agriculture and food systems for global food security, prevention of malnutrition in all its forms and inclusive development.

We believe that trade policies should form part of a larger integrated and coherent strategy towards improved sustainability of agriculture and food systems that includes a range of other domestic policies and investments.

In this regard, we are committed to the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the goals on “zero hunger” (SDG 2) and “partnerships for the goals” (SDG 17). We intend to meet the following four challenges:

1. Fostering trade for global food security

We underline that food value chains are increasingly integrated and global, with many final and intermediate food products and services from multiple origin countries.

We agree that trade is vital to connect producers and consumers and to supply countries, regions and communities that have a structural food supply deficit, and stress that this will become more acute as risks to food production and quality increase due to climate change and other environmental stresses.

We will therefore facilitate agricultural trade by strengthening trade rules and transparent and inclusive local, regional and global value chains and promote corresponding responsible investments, in particular in the poorest regions of the world.

We are convinced that trade contributes to better access to food for consumers and can create greater economic opportunities for all producers as well as much-needed jobs across food systems.

We will thus promote trade because it generates welfare gains by encouraging resource-efficient and cost-efficient production and by enhancing productivity and quality. Therefore the gains from trade can play a major role in the promotion of inclusive economic development and the alleviation of poverty, especially in rural areas. We stress the need for the benefits of trade to be widely distributed across society and emphasise the need to address the challenges in this regard.

We recognise trade-related issues as well as the role of trade in achieving globally-agreed nutrition objectives and in this regard we are attentively following the ongoing CFS process to develop “Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition”.

We will promote the implementation of necessary supporting policies, e.g. capacity development and social safety-net measures, to ensure that trade contributes to sustainable development, to ensure that welfare gains from trade are equitably distributed between and within countries across social strata, and to garner societal acceptance of trade, whilst respecting multilateral rules.

We emphasise that open and transparent markets can mitigate the risk of severe price spikes on both national and international markets and economies and reduce excessive price volatility with potential adverse impacts on the food security of low-income and vulnerable populations.

We will thus foster agricultural and trade policies that promote food security, reduce poverty and address global challenges in ways that avoid distorting production and trade. We will give due consideration to spill-over effects from national policies on other countries.

2. Making trade work for agricultural development

To harness the benefits of trade for sustainable agricultural development and create new economic opportunities, we commit to help farms, especially smallholders and family farms, become more efficient and resilient to shocks. We will therefore support diversification and the adoption of sustainable practices, promote risk management tools, strengthen land

tenure rights and invest in infrastructure, innovation, training, education and extension services.

To meet future challenges, we will foster technological, organisational, social and entrepreneurial innovations in the agricultural sector by opening markets for innovative products and services. We emphasise the leading role of young entrepreneurs in advancing innovations. We will facilitate access to and promote the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to empower all stakeholders across food systems with timely and accurate information. We will promote digital data governance frameworks for data sharing and data re-use to foster sustainable and inclusive development of food systems. We will furthermore provide the digital technology to enhance trade and to facilitate access to risk management opportunities for producers and we will encourage farmers to participate in electronic commerce. We will consider fostering the use of blockchain technologies in order to promote integrity and traceability of global value chains, taking into account possible challenges faced by small and medium producers and family farmers.

Against this background, we reaffirm our commitment to the GFFA Communiqué of 2019 on digitalisation in agriculture and smart solutions for future farming, being convinced that digitalisation will fully contribute to achieving SDGs.

In particular, we, the agriculture ministers of 71 nations, hereby thank FAO and the other International Organisations for developing a concept for the establishment of an International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture, as we requested in the 2019 GFFA Final Communiqué [<http://fao.org/digital-council>]. We welcome the FAO's efforts on the concept and call upon FAO's governing bodies to support a process for its establishment.

We will promote food and agricultural market transparency to mitigate risks of excessive price volatility and stress the value of the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS). In order for AMIS to function effectively, we encourage the active support and continuous engagement of all countries participating in this initiative.

We reaffirm that every country has the right to develop its own agricultural model, taking into account its own unique set of circumstances and objectives, to feed its population while respecting the needs of other countries and international obligations.

We highlight the fact that trade can accelerate the adoption of new technologies, nurture and increase entrepreneurial opportunities and make the food and agricultural sectors more attractive to a new generation of farmers.

3. Making food value chains inclusive, sustainable and safe

We note that, in many countries, small-scale agriculture is still the main source of food. Smallholders, family farmers and women farmers, in particular, continue to face severe difficulties in accessing markets.

Promoting inclusive trade

We will promote policies that enable all farmers to participate in trade. We are convinced that trade can have a positive impact on the economic empowerment of women. Women's empowerment in food systems can increase women's incomes and lift numerous families out of poverty. We will enable women farmers to benefit more equitably from agri-food value chains and will create better market opportunities for them by defending and improving their rights, promoting inclusion in decision-making, and providing access to resources and services tailored to their needs.

We will strive to integrate smallholders into markets, in line with the CFS policy recommendations on Connecting Smallholders to Markets, including by facilitating their engagement in cooperatives, which will help them improve market access and enhance their market power to forge links with downstream agribusinesses and improve value-added sharing in value chains.

We will promote access to different levels of financing for food sector activities, in particular those carried out by women and smallholders.

We will support the integration of trade as an essential component of domestic rural development strategies.

Enhancing sustainability

We are convinced that a sustainable increase in productivity can be realised in all geographical areas, especially in areas with more favourable conditions. Policies must thus be developed so that trade delivers smarter contributions to meet global challenges,

facilitates the sustainable and efficient use of water, land, biodiversity and energy and prevents overexploitation and degradation of land and natural resources. In particular, we will strengthen nationally appropriate measures to prevent deforestation and the drainage of peatlands, protect biodiversity, conserve natural resources and combat climate change that are respectful of international commitments, and will promote international dialogue and cooperation to achieve this goal. We stress the importance of direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, which vary between regions, and acknowledge that particular attention to these drivers is called for.

We reiterate the importance of fulfilling international commitments related to sustainable development, e.g. the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We will strive to take measures to reduce food loss and waste along food value chains. In particular, we will encourage cooperation with civil society and private actors to prevent food loss and waste at processing, retail, and consumer level as well as in the hospitality sector. We will also support the further development of platforms to share practices, technology and data regarding the reduction of pre-harvest and post-harvest losses, including the control of animal and plant pests and diseases.

We welcome efforts, including those by the private sector, to expand current markets to cater for agricultural products produced in a sustainable manner. We will promote efforts for the development of sustainable value chains consistent with UN guiding principles of business and human rights and the guidelines for responsible agricultural investments (CFS-RAI) and VGGT¹. Certification and appropriate, non-deceptive labelling in line with WTO rules, in particular the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), can enable consumers to make sustainable food choices.

At the same time, we recognise the challenges that producers and exporters, including family farmers and smallholders, face in complying with a growing number of private standards and certification schemes. In this regard, we underscore the importance of

¹ Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests

transparency and of protecting consumer choices while avoiding unjustified barriers to trade.

We welcome efforts by the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) and regional organisations to develop standards for sustainable agriculture, such as the standard on sustainable cocoa, as practical steps towards transparency and informed consumer choices.

We will encourage ISO to consider, as appropriate, the development of voluntary, internationally agreed standards for sustainable supply chains in order to provide a clear, transparent and reliable framework as one possible element of sustainable rural development.

We also encourage initiatives to assist small-scale producers to thrive in more demanding but more lucrative new markets.

Ensuring food safety

We acknowledge that international food-safety as well as plant and animal health standards, based on the SPS Agreement, are essential for reaping the benefits of agricultural trade and for avoiding potential risks to human, animal and plant health. Unsafe food imposes an enormous burden on economies, aggravates malnutrition, leads to food insecurity and perpetuates poverty, putting already vulnerable populations at greatest risk. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) should be given due consideration and we refer to our respective commitments in the GFFA Communiqué of 2018.

We are also aware that unjustified sanitary and phytosanitary restrictions on food trade can exacerbate food insecurity and result in increased food waste and loss of markets and associated income.

We will facilitate trade in agriculture and in safe and nutritious food products by taking appropriate measures in accordance with the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and international standards set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in order to protect human, animal and plant life and health while facilitating trade. We will further promote and strengthen the role that the three standard-setting organisations (CAC, OIE and IPPC) play within the sanitary and

phytosanitary field of international trade. The 2020 United Nations International Year of Plant Health will provide the Member States with an excellent opportunity to highlight the importance of plant health for global food security and safety as much as animal health is also essential to ensure the basis of healthy nutrition for all.

We are committed to provide adequate investments in food-safety capacity, infrastructure and governance and to foster member participation in these three international organisations.

We will continue to support the efforts of developing countries to improve risk-based food safety management systems and SPS measures in order to improve their human, animal and plant health status and their ability to gain and maintain access to markets. We therefore support the work of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and other entities devoted to building food safety capacity.

4. Strengthening fair rules in agricultural trade

We underline the crucial importance of the multilateral rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable trading system and reaffirm the principles and objectives set out in the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO in 1995 and the contribution that the WTO has made to strengthening the stability of the global economy.

We reaffirm the value of taking decisions through a consensus-based and member-driven process at the WTO and we remain firmly committed to this trading system and to ensuring the proper functioning of its dispute settlement system.

We highlight the need to update global trade rules to reflect market and policy shifts that have occurred in recent years and to address contemporary agricultural and food challenges.

We note that some progress has been made in reducing trade-distorting agricultural support in the past. However, we are concerned about increasing trade-distorting domestic support being provided by some countries and the negative effects this can have on farmers' income in other countries. Therefore, we strongly encourage the continuing discussions in this pillar. We believe that WTO-compliant free-trade agreements can make a vital contribution towards opening markets to the extent that they are complementary to efforts being made

at multilateral level to reduce trade barriers. Bilateral free-trade agreements can also contribute to sustainable development by incorporating ambitious sustainability chapters.

We stress that the WTO can play an important role in helping achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 2 “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”.

In the same way and in the spirit of inclusive development, we commit to provide special and differential treatment within the WTO framework to developing countries as appropriate, particularly to least developed countries, that have a deficit in their agricultural development in order that they can produce enough to meet their special needs.

We will work constructively with other WTO members in the lead-up to the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nur-Sultan, with a view to achieving a positive outcome.

At the 2022 GFFA, we will discuss the progress made regarding the commitments in this communiqué.