

**Checked as delivered**

**Statement delivered by Mr Ruve Schank, Minister Counsellor of the Republic of Estonia  
on behalf of the European Union and its 28 Member States**

**40th session of the FAO Conference**

**(Rome, 3-8 July 2017)**

Thank you Mr Chair,

1. I am honoured to speak on behalf not only of Estonia but also on behalf of the European Union and its 28 Member States.
2. We thank FAO for the document C 2017/2 on the ‘State of Food and Agriculture 2016: Climate change, agriculture and food security’ addressing issues such as agricultural transformation, carbon emissions, trade, private investments, value chains, risk management and innovation. These issues are high on the policy agenda of both the EU and its Member States.
3. In addressing climate change challenges, agriculture is in the front line and can be a vector of change for the better. On the one hand, the agriculture sector is most affected by climate change; on the other hand, it is currently a source of greenhouse gas emissions, which can and should be reduced; but it also has the potential to provide a range of solutions, notably in relation to the storage of carbon. That is why agriculture must receive more prominence in the climate change debate.
4. Development and environmental concerns must go hand in hand. The European Union and its Member States recognise the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impacts of climate change. We have clearly expressed our environmental and climate-related engagement, in particular through commitments to the Paris Agreement and to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Agriculture has an important role to play in contributing to our commitments and, in order to realize that potential, the EU will continue to enhance the environmental sustainability and climate-resilience of agriculture in its policies.
5. We have already integrated the sustainable development dimensions into the objectives of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy, the agricultural trade policy and the agricultural research policy. And the next reform of the CAP will only go further in this direction. The EU and its Member States are fully committed to achieving the universal, transformative and ambitious Agenda 2030. This includes making agricultural production resilient and sustainable, while increasing and diversifying production, enhancing productivity, helping maintain ecosystems and improving the capacity for climate change adaptation. By no means an easy assignment. But an assignment we are taking seriously.

6. We acknowledge FAO's role in supporting Member States' efforts in climate smart agriculture. Furthermore, we support the Organisation's role in strengthening countries' capacities to access climate finance by providing assistance for drafting specific programmes focused on food and agriculture. We are glad that FAO works in close collaboration with the Financial Mechanism of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in this regard.
7. We wish to underline that achieving sustainable agriculture can only become a reality by empowering the farmers themselves. Their role is central and their position in the food supply chain should be strengthened. In this regard, it is of special importance to address the barriers that women face, and ensure their effective participation on equal footing with men. However, farmers cannot do it all on their own: processors, retailers and consumers each have their role to play in making food systems sustainable. Overall, agriculture will become increasingly knowledge-intensive. Building sustainable agriculture and climate-resilient food systems will require education, human and institutional capacity-building, as well as major efforts in terms of research and innovation.
8. Less than two months ago, the EU and its Member States adopted a new European Consensus on Development. This Consensus underlines that sustainable agriculture – together with sustainable fisheries and aquaculture – remains a key driver for poverty eradication and sustainable development, and that it is indispensable to end hunger and ensure food security. It also states that the greenhouse gas mitigation potential of sustainable agriculture and soils must be harnessed, while resilience to climate change impacts should be enhanced. To do so, the EU and its Member States will among others support sustainable forest management, sustainable agriculture including agro-ecological practices, and actions to protect soils, conserve water resources, and halt, prevent and reverse global deforestation.
9. We share the FAO's views that 'Adequate climate financing and agricultural investments are essential to enable the transition to sustainable agricultural practices'. Over the years, we have been working in partnership with developing countries to support policies in agriculture, to improve business and investments environments, as well as to increase responsible investments for agricultural transformation. Given the challenges ahead, these partnerships will be strengthened, with governments, with farmer organisations and with the private sector.
10. FAO has highlighted that climate change is 'likely to exacerbate existing imbalances between the developed and the developing world' and that 'trade could play a stabilizing role for potentially lower productivity and higher price volatility by making available supplies from food surplus areas to food deficit regions'. We agree that mutually beneficial agricultural trade can be part of the solution and can contribute to sustainable development, food security and poverty reduction. In an increasingly interconnected world, we are committed to supporting farmers in developing countries to reap the benefits of trade. Access to markets – local, national, regional and global – is an important source of jobs and growth. A better functioning trading system should assure quality standards, increase value added and market transparency, and ultimately raise incomes for farmers, while supporting a more sustainable management of natural resources and improving farmers' resilience.

11. We welcome FAO's analysis that 'Social protection, education and active labour market policies are needed to mitigate many of the risks associated with diversification and migration'; and the 'call for greater efforts to provide coverage for the poorest, especially in rural areas'. We support building further knowledge to assist decision making in this respect.
12. Finally, we look forward to see the launch of the 2017 SOFA report focused on 'Structural and sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems' which is a logical follow-up to the content of the present discussion.

Thank you, Chair.

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