

Delivered in Portuguese - checked against English interpretation

**Address by Her Excellency Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias
Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply of the
Federative Republic of Brazil
on the occasion of the
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I have the pleasure and honour to express the sincere appreciation of the Brazilian Government for the election of Dr. Qu Dongyu as Director- General of FAO. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my fellow countryman, Professor José Graziano da Silva, for the completion of his term in office.

Over the past 8 years, FAO and its members have met emerging global challenges with ambitious commitments. Brazil is willing to do even more, and in return we will also ask for more from this Organization.

With the approval of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we have committed to not only to reduce, but to eradicate hunger in the world. Today, we can, and we shall, go even further: the growing population of the world should also eat better, through the democratization of access to diverse and high-quality food.

In order to achieve this goal, which is no longer just a pipe dream, we need at the very least a two-pillar strategy: to adopt pro-development policies, with the necessary promotion of free and fair international trade; and to foster an environment that stimulates innovation, with strict adherence to scientific principles.

The 2018 Report on the State of Food and Agriculture points out the lack of employment and opportunities in rural areas, as well as environmental degradation, as some of the factors that lead to rural migration. It, therefore, confirms that the revitalization and revalorization of agriculture and rural areas are crucial elements in the quest for solutions to contemporary challenges.

Agriculture, agribusiness and the bioeconomy can and should be a synonymous to development, and generation of income and opportunities. In Brazil, agribusiness employs 18 million people and accounts for more than a fifth of our GDP. We welcome, in this context, the recent launch of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming. In Brazil, there are more than 5 million family farms, which produce a large part of the food consumed in the country.

This successful model can be replicated abroad, especially in the Least Developed Countries. It is therefore crucial to consider agriculture and food security together with agricultural trade issues. Protectionism in developed countries has threatened the viability of a green revolution in developing countries by exposing them to unfair competition from subsidized goods and by denying access to major consumer markets. A free and fair agricultural trade would trigger a virtuous cycle, in which greater decentralization in supply would ensure wider access to adequate food and nutrition.

There is yet another indispensable factor for the democratization of agricultural production: the promotion of innovation. Innovation made it possible to develop the Brazilian model of sustainable and highly productive tropical farming, when it was widely believed that the capacity for large agricultural production was restricted to temperate zones. With the advent of technology, grain production in Brazil has grown five times in the last 40 years, while our crop area remaining essentially unchanged. Today we can find Brazilian food at the tables of more than one billion people around the world, every day.

In line with the resolution on sustainable agricultural approaches, innovation has also allowed Brazil to produce and, at the same time, to conserve. Just over 30 percent of the country's land is used for agriculture, with several strong measures in place for permanent preservation. Under Brazilian legislation, farmers must maintain a portion of their lands covered by forests or other native vegetation at their own expense.

Several national policies and technologies have fostered the consolidation of sustainable farming, such as the promotion of organic and agroecological agriculture; agroforestry and crop- livestock-forest integration systems; planting of commercial forests; and the recovery of degraded areas. Such policies have linked agricultural production to the provision of ecosystem services, to the maintenance of biodiversity, to the protection of drinking water sources, and to the stability of global climate.

Again, all these achievements, including the environmental ones, are only possible thanks to innovation. And it is precisely this driver of development that is now under threat due to the practices, perhaps even well-intentioned practices, but with widespread harmful effects, of some wealthy countries. By abandoning science-based principles in the regulation of food production and trade, such countries undermine fair trade and the whole environment for innovation that would allow us to feed more people with fewer resources. Furthermore, by misinforming consumers, giving in to pressure groups and departing from multilateral rules, certain actors jeopardize the same objectives they claim to protect, namely: the development of the poorest; democratic access to high-quality food; and the preservation of the environment.

It is imperative to strengthen FAO's role as a forum for technical support in the production of healthy food. The collaboration with other bodies, such as the WTO, the WHO, the OIE, the IPPC and the Codex Alimentarius, should be based on the soundest of scientific standards, applicable to all and in line with an open and fair multilateral trade system.

A system based on science and clear rules has been our collective response to a past of risks and uncertainty. This framework must become the driving force that will guarantee abundant and high-quality food, leading our nations, for the first time in history, to guarantee the food security of all our population, without neglecting the preservation of our environmental assets.

This is Brazil's commitment, which I reiterate here today. Distinguished delegates and delegations, a commitment not only to FAO and to the multilateral system, but to all future generations.