

**Statement delivered by
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Excellencies,
Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

Before I begin, I will like to congratulate Dr Qu Dongyu on his election as the new Director-General of FAO. I will also like to extend my appreciation to Dr José Graziano da Silva for his able leadership of FAO and his commitment towards achieving SDG 2 on Zero Hunger.

It is an honor and a pleasure to be here with you in Rome for this important discussion. I would like to thank the FAO for the excellent work done on the 2018 State of Food and Agriculture Report and acknowledge its findings on the various challenges, and opportunities, of migration and how it can impact agriculture and rural development.

The Challenge of Feeding Cities and Urban Populations

As the world's urban population grows, all of us will face the challenge of how to feed our urban populations efficiently and sustainably. Traditional agricultures have long been the world's food basket. Countries and cities around the world depend on traditional agriculture, aquaculture, and livestock farming for our food.

However, increasing migration of populations to cities will have an impact on the availability of workers for traditional agriculture. This phenomenon, coupled with climate change, has begun to threaten the security of this food basket.

In fact, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates widespread declines in crop yields of up to 25 per cent by 2050, while global food demand continues to increase. We will have to find solutions to overcome these challenges.

Urban food solutions as a way to supplement food production around the world

Singapore faces the challenges of feeding our city ever more acutely. We are heavily dependent on food imports for our supply, and have hardly any rural space. That is why we have begun looking for ways to supplement and support food production. Apart from the lack of land or sea spaces in Singapore, resources such as energy, water and labor, are also scarce and precious. We are therefore exploring innovative methods, such as urban food solutions that are land-, energy-, and cost-effective, to ensure that there will be food available for all.

The constraints of Singapore mean that we would not be able to contribute to the world food basket via traditional agriculture. However, the advent of advanced technologies in recent years has made it possible for us to produce high yields of certain food in a cost-efficient and price-competitive manner. These urban food solutions include the use of unconventional and unutilized urban spaces, not usually thought of as farming spaces. Growing food in controlled environments also has the additional benefit of guarding against climate change and extreme weather. We hope that this could create employment and open exciting opportunities for a younger cohort of passionate, tech-savvy, agri-specialists.

In the long run, urban food solutions may be able to complement traditional agriculture to sustain global food security for the global population, projected to hit at least 9 billion people and specifically for the urban population.

Singapore is preparing ourselves for this. We have reorganized ourselves to bring together all food-related functions under the new Singapore Food Agency since 1 April 2019. This new agency is under the oversight of the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. This organizational structure will enable us to co-create climate-resilient, sustainable solutions with the industry and our research institutions.

FAO's support for urban food solutions

We have also read recently that FAO and the World Bank are working on a report on Urban Food Solutions. It would be interesting to see how the findings by the World Bank can complement FAO's work in ensuring that food is available for all.

Conclusion

As Singapore advances on its food security journey, we look forward to becoming the global "living lab" for food technologies and exploration of urban farming solutions. We hope that this will benefit not just Singapore, but supplement the world's food needs. Where feasible, we will be happy to collaborate with the FAO in this endeavour, as the FAO has done related work such as in its Food for the Cities initiative launched in 2000 and the FAO framework for the Urban Food Agenda launched in March this year.

I thank you for your attention.