

## **35th FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

**Montego Bay, Jamaica, March 5-8, 2018**

### **Declaration of the Private Sector**

The private sector represented here thanks FAO for the opportunity to relaunch a dialogue that will help us deal with the enormous challenges facing our society today in terms of food, health and the environment. By working together, we believe that we can be more effective in responding to the call by the United Nations to all sectors in terms of helping countries meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are living in a time of economic, cultural, productive, educational, labour and environmental change, while changes in transport, urban organization and mobility, among many others, have transformed the way in which individuals, families, communities and food supply systems are organized. Our way of life has changed and with it all the factors that determine our dietary behaviours and physical activity. This challenge involves the entire food system, from small-scale agriculture to mass production, in order to meet our current and future food needs.

All the actors in the food system face the challenge of understanding the changes in consumer behaviour, since these have led to problems that have multiple causes and whose approach requires multi-sectoral policies with broad inter-ministerial and inter-institutional coordination. For this reason, we believe that isolated actions are not as effective as coordinated actions guided by a well-directed State policy, which are capable of considering the scope of the problem.

From the perspective of the private sector, we have worked together in the past with great success; we have vast experience with good results, and today's challenge is no exception, for example:

For decades, governments, multilateral organizations and the private sector have agreed on norms and standards for the promotion of health and the environment, including key issues such as food quality and safety, food hygiene, nutritional labelling, food additives, technical barriers to trade, and best practices for sustainability, through platforms such as CODEX ALIMENTARIUS and the International Organization for Standardization, which have helped to reach a balance between production, health, the environment, science and commerce.

Through public-private cooperation, we have significantly reduced micronutrient deficiencies in most countries and decreased the prevalence of many diseases. We have also been pioneers in the inter-institutional partnership for the reduction of sodium content in some food groups. At the same time, we have modernized agriculture and

agro-industry, which has increased the availability and variety of foods through productivity and trade, with an eye to the 20/30 objectives.

But, so far, the scope has mainly been local. Fortunately, FAO is offering us the opportunity to design and implement a policy agenda that we can raise to a regional level, and in which the private sector can share its many success stories.

Nowadays, we can no longer speak only of production, but we must have a holistic view in terms of food and address issues that impact food and nutritional security. We must also address environmental sustainability, with a vision that extends from the field to the table. In other words, if we do not look at food issues in a systemic way from the perspective of sustainability, healthy nutrition and inclusive production, we will not see significant changes in the availability of food.

**For this reason, the private sector has identified a series of challenges, which we ask FAO to consider as part of the discussion for the next biennium.**

1. **There is a single food system.** All the links of the agri-food chain are equally important and must be addressed in an integrated manner, since they are complementary. The objective of producing a sufficient quantity of nutritious and healthy food requires a robust and competitive agricultural sector, and a highly innovative food industry. The synergy between family farming and industrial production is essential, and both must go hand-in-hand to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. **We must invest in the competitiveness of small-scale agricultural producers,** with smart and well-defined policies for family farming that are able to generate improvements in food and nutritional security. The private sector proposes the promotion of associativity and the implementation of successful business models in these production systems, as mechanisms to reduce costs, achieve economies of scale, obtain and exploit technological connectivity, and create the conditions of long-term prosperity that will ensure the intergenerational continuity of family farming.
3. While 800 million people globally are undernourished and suffer from hunger, a third of the food produced is lost or wasted. That means 1.3 billion tons of food per year is lost with a global cost of more than USD 400 billion. This reality obliges us to promote efficient and sustainable food systems, not only with a focus on production, but also on the causes and effects of food loss and waste, in order to produce more and better.
4. The incorporation of best environmental protection practices within the entire food chain should help to guarantee the long-term availability of food. We have the enormous challenge of balancing the equation between production and the environment, as well as facing the challenges of climate change. We also recommend that countries consider non-traditional financing alternatives, be they fiscal incentives for companies that reduce their carbon and water footprints, or the implementation

of a green bond for companies that achieve their goals to reduce these impacts or make productive investments to improve environmental management. In addition, at the public policy level there is an opportunity to improve systemic analysis, since the lack of information makes it difficult to quantify the environmental impacts of mitigation measures, such as new agricultural and manufacturing practices, the development of renewable energy sources, and actions to reduce food loss and waste, among others. In this regard, we propose expanding the objective of FAO's proposed regional platform for the conservation of biodiversity, not only focusing on the adoption of good practices, but also to integrate early warning systems, knowledge transfer and measurement systems, and monitoring and supervision of initiatives at the regional level.

5. It is important to move towards a different approach, which does not punish but rather encourages private sector activities for the promotion of healthy diets. In this regard, we are committed to promoting the development and innovation of the food supply system, considering technological feasibility, the realities of food production, and implications for trade.
6. In addition to the efforts already being made by the private sector, we consider that a key element for the promotion of public health is education, since education, among other things, is necessary to acquire healthy eating habits.
7. It is also necessary for public policies to be more aligned with scientific studies related to nutritional epidemiology. Inaccuracies in the analysis of this aspect can lead to wasted time and public resources. In this regard, both the public and private sectors have an opportunity to approach academic institutions, research and food science institutes, and civil society organizations, to develop policies whose impacts are measurable and verifiable.

**Facing these challenges requires coordinated action rather than isolated initiatives, which is why the private sector has identified a number of aspects that are important for achieving this objective:**

**FIRST: As Dr. Julio Berdagué has stated, we must strengthen multi-sectoral partnerships** and promote respectful, transparent and inclusive dialogue among regional representatives of the private sector, civil society, academia and food science, and with international and government agencies related to the promotion of health, nutrition, sustainability, rural development and trade.

**SECOND: We must rebuild trust and credibility.** This means restarting the dialogue between private companies and health institutions. We call for avoiding mechanisms that limit transparency and for measures that facilitate the inclusive participation of the private sector. Considering different points of view allows us to develop balanced and

politically feasible proposals. Differences of criteria, or the entrepreneurial spirit, should not be a reason to exclude the contribution of the productive, academic or scientific research sectors.

**THIRD: Allow CODEX ALIMENTARIUS to play the role it was developed over decades to perform.** It is essential that organizations such as FAO and WHO/PAHO maintain their focus on promoting processes within institutions that shape regulatory frameworks. CODEX offers an institutional framework that balances the mandate of health protection with science. When we depart from this equilibrium, disharmonized regulation in countries flourishes, which represents a setback in the growth of productive activity. That is why we believe that it is important to strengthen the international harmonization of regulations, and their adherence to standards of scientific clarity and transparency.

**FOURTH:** FAO is the entity responsible for promoting dialogue and transparency in the food system. We call for the creation of an inter-institutional space that combines the objectives, interests and contributions of all the actors in the food system, but which for different reasons are currently uncoordinated.

We, as the private sector of Latin America and the Caribbean, today have the honour of participating in this conference, in order to face together the great challenges of modern society regarding food and nutritional security. Finally, we invite you all to continue working together with the private sector, since the effectiveness of this approach is more than proven and is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

THANK YOU