

< The 38th FAO Plenary Session Speech >

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Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Republic of Korea

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed with great honor to address the FAO General Assembly today on behalf of the Republic of Korea. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the FAO for their wonderful organization of this auspicious meeting.

Owing to climate change, rise in population and increased volatility in food price, agricultural authorities, farmers, consumers as well as other relevant parties throughout the world are highly concerned about food security and nutrition. We must note that, merely relying on intensive farming to mitigate concerns of food security could lead to creating a vicious cycle of aggravated productivity in the agri-food chain.

Therefore, we must take a cautious approach when implementing policies for food security.

It is highly meaningful and timely that the FAO member states met together to exchange information on their respective agricultural and food system and seek cooperation opportunities, with a goal to promoting happiness of mankind by ensuring food security and nutrition.

In 1970, Korea was able to self-supply 86.2% of its total national food consumption. However, with continued decrease in the self-sufficiency rate of food, ensuring food security has been one of the top priorities of the agricultural authority. Although considerable improvements in agricultural productivity have been made, downtrend persisted to record self-sufficiency rate of 44.5% in 2011.

Following the inauguration of the new government, Korea has been pursuing innovative policy transitions in order to better ensure food security. The key idea is to reform agricultural system based on the principles of Creative Economy which is the economic paradigm of the new government, enhance sustainability in food system and encourage multi-sectoral collaboration.

First, our sixth-order industry integration policy, which is an initiative to integrate agriculture with ICT, creative ideas, production, processing and tourism industry, is expected to not only enhance economic value of agriculture, but also improve sustainability, attributed to better integration of urban and rural communities, so ultimately contributing to food security.

Second, along with innovating our agricultural system, Korea will endeavor to expand accessibility and availability of agri-food for all nationals. In more precise terms, Korea will advance distribution and allocation process to gradually reduce loss of agricultural produce. Korea will also mitigate price volatility of agri-food at the market with supply and demand harmonization by encouraging autonomous arrangements between farmers and consumers.

Last, Korea will put more emphasis on alleviating imbalances in nutrition and micro-nutrients, which resulted from changes in life-style and diet. Reinforced education on nutrition and diet will contribute to reducing current 10% of undernourished population. Nutrition issues are not limited to food system and have close linkage to health and social security system.

Hence, Korea will address nutrition issues by collaboration of all relevant ministries.

Recognizing that the food safety and nutrition issues are not confined to a nation, but a global problem, Korea has been providing various supports aimed at improving sustainability in the food system of the developing countries. Korea has established a number of Korea Project on International Agriculture centers in Asian, African and Latin American region, which serve the purpose of disseminating Korea's experiences on agricultural policy and technology. Korea has also been partnering with the FAO to implement various programmes aimed at removing vulnerabilities in the food system of the developing countries.

I believe that collective spirit, shared value, willingness to cooperate and dedication of the member states will become the greatest asset in our way toward promoting happiness of mankind through eradicating global poverty. Availing this opportunity, Korea would like to express its hope that the current reform of the FAO will contribute to improving sustainability of the member states' food system.

While conveying that the requests of partnership for ensuring food security by the member states will be highly welcomed,

Korea would like to assure its commitment to provide active supports.

Thank you.