

Statement delivered by
Mr. Lim Kok Thai, Chief Executive Officer
Food Agency of the Republic of Singapore
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Director-General Qu Dongyu,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honour to be here with you for this important discussion. Allow me to first thank FAO for taking efforts to organize this Conference notwithstanding the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

The theme on agriculture food systems transformation is timely and a good reminder to take action to transform our agriculture food systems. This is critical to achieving the SDGs. We thus look forward to the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit and its outcomes.

According to the UN report “Shaping the Trends of Our Time”, the proportion of people living in urban areas will rise from 53 percent to 70 percent by 2050. As the world’s urban population grows, all of us will face the challenge of feeding our urban populations efficiently and sustainably.

Traditional agriculture has been the world’s food basket. However, climate change threatens the security of this food basket. Scientists estimate 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 this challenge.

Singapore is no exception. As a small City State, we face the challenge of ensuring food security acutely. To provide for our food needs, over 90 percent of our food is sourced from over 170 countries and regions. In fact, trade in food and other essential goods is an important part of ensuring food security for all countries. In this regard, it is important to not only ensure that trade continues to flow but also look to increasing connectivity between countries.

We are also aiming to raise our own food production to supplement our food supply. Besides the lack of land and sea spaces, resources such as energy, water and labour are also scarce in Singapore. That is why we have begun looking to transform our food production. Our food growing solutions will need to be resource efficient given our constraints. We are thus exploring innovative methods such as urban food solutions.

Advanced technologies in recent years have allowed us to grow more with less. Technology such as vertical farms has made it possible to produce food in a highly productive manner using less land. These urban food solutions include leveraging unconventional urban spaces not usually thought of as farming spaces. Growing food in controlled environments also has the benefit of guarding against the impact of climate change and extreme weather.

In addition, we are looking at novel food production, such as alternative proteins, which are poised to be game changers for high-yield food production. We hope that these new ways of farming and food production can contribute to greater food security, as well as create exciting employment opportunities for a younger cohort of passionate, tech-savvy, agri-specialists.

Given these global trends of climate change and a growing world population, it is important for agriculture and food systems to become more productive, climate-resilient, and sustainable. In this

regard, the focus on innovation and technology is an important component of FAO's work. With increasing rural-urban migration, urban food solutions can be an important part of countries' food systems. It can also help reduce carbon miles by producing food right where people live.

With this in mind, we encourage FAO to provide greater focus on urban food solutions and consider coming up with policy guidance to help governments to take advantage of this approach.

As Singapore advances on our food security journey, we look forward to becoming a "living lab" for food technologies and urban farming solutions. We hope that this will benefit not just Singapore, but be a pathfinder for cities around the world. Where feasible, we will be happy to collaborate with the FAO in this endeavour.

Thank you.