

**ARGENTINA'S COMMENTS TO THE
POLICY CONVERGENCE PROCESS**

ON AGROECOLOGICAL AND OTHER INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

1. General comments on agroecology and other innovative approaches

- a) Argentina considers the report prepared by the HLPE a valuable document, particularly in view of the fact that food systems are currently facing changes that are occurring with increasing frequency and speed, which poses a number of challenges in the context of the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda. In particular, SDG 2 calls to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. Hence, the challenge is to produce more, in a sustainable manner, and reduce food losses and waste.
- b) Such a scenario makes innovation a key element in the search for solutions and alternatives. Therefore, Argentina welcomes the fact that the report highlights the central role that innovative approaches will play in achieving food security and nutrition. This will allow fruitful debates on the importance of such approaches, practices and technologies; considering that agroecology, although a valuable tool, is just one of several options that countries can adopt to achieve sustainable food systems.
- c) The technification of agriculture and investment in diagnostics, balanced nutrition and other aspects, are necessary tools to reduce production gaps and contribute to food security, while conserving natural resources.
- d) For this reason, it is important for FAO to support Member's initiatives and efforts to improve food and production systems, for example, by supporting sustainability through agriculture that promotes and adopts Good Agricultural Practices (including, among others, no-till farming, in combination with crop rotation, soil sampling and monitoring, and balanced crop nutrition through fertilization). Argentina is working on all these aspects.
- e) Argentina also appreciates the recognition of the existence of different food systems and of the diversity of challenges each of these faces. This situation may require different solutions, bearing in mind that there is no unique and exclusive path to sustainable agriculture and to the achievement of the SDGs. In many cases, there are already actions and initiatives in place to increase the sustainability of existing systems.

- f) Argentina wishes to highlight the role of technology in improving sustainability of food systems. The Argentine agricultural sector has incorporated and replicated innovative practices, which has allowed agricultural production to increase from 40 million tons to 120 million tons in the last 25 years, as a result of a structural transformation process and the fast adoption of technologies.
- g) The revolution in agricultural technology is key for agriculture to make a step forward. In this regards, Argentina highlights the role of biotechnology as a tool to reduce costs and improve efficiency, in ways which contribute to more sustainable use of resources, simplification of tasks, risks prevention and increase in production and final product quality. In this way, biotechnology plays a central role to ensure food security. Moreover, biotechnology plays a key role in preserving the environment. In many cases, improved crops do not require the use of agrochemicals (which means that the use of machinery for their application is not necessary either, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions). Biotechnology also allows greater use of bionputs to replace agrochemicals.

2. General comments on the HLPE report

- a) Argentina understands that the application of ecological principles for agriculture is not an exclusive practice of agroecology, since all productive systems that promote sustainability take ecological processes and soil fertility and health into consideration.
- b) The HLPE report introduces concepts such us “political ecology”, “participatory crop improvement” and “moral aspects of food”. The implications of these terms in relation to agroecology are unknown. Therefore, Argentina requests clarifications on the meaning and scope of such terms.
- c) It is observed that the HLPE report refers to agroecology as a "pathway towards food sovereignty", or as a "key element for food sovereignty". In view of the fact that the concept of "food sovereignty" has not been agreed at the multilateral level, Argentina requests that no reference be made to this concept in the Convergence Process and that, in any case, the term "food security" be used.
- d) With regard to the identification of "connectivity" as one of the agro-ecological principles, Argentina stresses the importance of ensuring trust between producers and consumers; which is not necessarily limited to short distribution networks and does not exclude links between consumers and suppliers located far from consumption centers; since it is possible that food is produced in

sustainable manner even in locations which are distant to where the product is ultimately consumed.

- e) With regard to the report's references to the use of fertilizers, Argentina also wishes to draw attention to the importance of soil monitoring. Soil sampling allows clear information on nutritional needs in order to plan fertilization. It is important to achieve the balance of nutrients, avoiding excess and contamination; and it is also equally relevant to prevent sustained extraction of nutrients and loss of fertility, which cause soil degradation.
- f) It is also important to consider, in the light of references throughout the report to different scales of farming, that the degradation of agro-ecosystems and the presence of biodiversity are not associated with farm size, but with how resources are managed.
- g) Finally, the report highlights that there are still gaps in knowledge about agro-ecological approaches and their capacity to generate sustainable agricultural systems. In that regard, Argentina stresses the importance of understanding the concepts that require further research.

2. Comments on the recommendations of the HLPE report.

- a) On **recommendation 1.c** relative to the ecological footprint, Argentina believes that this may be an inaccurate indicator. In addition, there is disagreement among countries on its promotion and adoption. The same applies to the concept of "climate-smart agriculture".
- b) On **recommendations 2.i.a and 5.b** -which encourage States to explore ways to redirect subsidies and incentives that currently benefit unsustainable practices- and on references made to trade policies that obstacle the transition to agro-ecological systems, Argentina stresses the importance of considering the ongoing negotiations within the framework of the WTO –particularly, in the context of the continuation of the reform process of multilateral agricultural rules, including negotiations to reduce and eliminate subsidies to the sector-.

On the other hand, it is recalled that in target 2.b of the 2030 Agenda, States agreed to "Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round".

Efforts should be made to reduce and remove (rather than "redirect") agricultural subsidies, since they affect international trade in agricultural goods, thereby

impacting food security and nutrition of producers of these goods from other countries that do not offer subsidies. They also entail inefficient allocation of public resources, which could be allocated to poverty reduction or rural development policies, which would also contribute to improving food security and nutrition.

It is important that objectives linked to improving the sustainability of agricultural systems are not used as a justification for maintaining or increasing trade-distorting measures, including measures linked to “food labeling” (recommendation 2.b)-, and that any financial incentive/subsidy granted takes into account the obligations derived from multilateral rules.

- c) Argentina welcomes **recommendation 3** on strengthening support for research. New agricultural technologies, as well as access to connectivity, are keys for the agricultural sector to increase productivity, sustainability and resource efficiency, in response to the increasingly pressing need to increase food production.
- d) With regard to **recommendation 4** on strengthening stakeholders and the possibility of adding this element as a fifth pillar of food security (recommendation 1.e), Argentina agrees on the importance of consumers being able to have reliable information on how food has been produced in order to evaluate their choices about food systems and desired nutritional outcome. Measures should be taken to ensure that this information is supported by sound scientific evidence, as well as to avoid discrimination between similar products according to their production methods and processes without due justification.
- e) With regard to **recommendation 5.c** relative to true cost accounting for negative as well as positive externalities in food systems and the adoption of measures to apply it, as appropriate, Argentina considers that such reference might suggest that current prices do not correctly reflect production costs. It might also imply an endorsement of the application of border measures as a way of penalizing negative externalities, including possible "unsustainable practices". In this regard, it is important that any measures implemented respect WTO rules, for which they should be based on sound scientific evidence and should be the least trade-restrictive in order to achieve legitimate goals.