

Dear Chair, dear participants of this year's Plenary,

thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to present the most important aspects with respect to soil of the final communiqué of the 2022 Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA).

The GFFA has evolved into THE international conference on key issues related to the global agri-food system.

Every year, the GFFA is dedicated to a priority topic. This year's motto – "Food Security Starts with the Soil" – provided the framework for discussions about the relevance of preserving and promoting healthy soils and potential solutions.

The highlight of the GFFA is the Agriculture Ministers' Conference, the world's largest informal Conference of Agriculture Ministers.

This year, 68 Agriculture Ministers and 11 high-level representatives of international organisations participated.

They agreed on significantly strengthening the sustainable use and management of our soils worldwide.

The result of the conference was laid down in a final communiqué. The ministers stress that healthy soils are key in order to combat the global challenges of our times, in particular the production of sufficient nutritious and safe food, adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, and the halting and reversal of biodiversity loss.

They also emphasise the importance of ensuring a holistic approach, jointly tackling environmental, economic and social issues.

They see the need to significantly strengthen the sustainable use and management of our land and soils and pledge to take action.

In the remaining time of this presentation I am going to summarise the most important actions of the final communiqué with respect to soil and land:

- Soil as a scarce resource and the foundation for terrestrial ecosystems and agricultural production must be protected.
- Soil biodiversity is a prerequisite for healthy soils.
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation must also be advanced; for both of which soils are a valuable instrument.
- In this context, the Ministers reaffirmed the long-term goal set out in the Paris Agreement of halting the increase in global average temperature.
- It is crucial to reduce carbon dioxide emissions of drained peatlands.
- Soils can store significant amounts of carbon, and soil that is rich in organic matter can store more water for dry periods. Therefore, the ministers seek to maintain or raise the content of soil organic carbon by, *inter alia*, encouraging

agricultural practices that bind carbon and improve soil health as well as water retention capacities.

- The Ministers intend to specifically foster agricultural practices that are aimed at supporting healthy soils.
- Examples include a sustainable and efficient handling of nutrients and the responsible use of pesticides.
- Another important contribution to protecting and improving soil biodiversity is organic farming.
- Since global soil resources are limited, they need to be managed sustainably.
- This includes minimising land take and restoring degraded land for agricultural use.
- The progression of desertification is alarming.
- In this context, site-adapted measures such as the restoration of productive and biologically diverse landscapes are necessary.
- One example is Africa's Great Green Wall.
- The Ministers also underlined the great significance of ground cover through forests and grassland as protection of soils against erosion.
- Soil sealing is to be minimised. The goal of halting deforestation and the degradation of forests and other ecosystems by 2030 was reaffirmed.
- Soil protection is also to be supported through responsible agricultural supply chains.
- But first and foremost, all people should have non-discriminatory access to agricultural land.
- Farmers must have access to land to be able to farm.
- In this regard, long-term and secure tenure rights promote a careful management of soil.
- The Agriculture Ministers underlined that rules for the acquisition and use of land are of major importance for safeguarding food security. Land acquisition must be in accordance with human rights and should take into consideration social and environmental impacts. The Agriculture Ministers support the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests issued by the Committee on World Food Security and will promote their implementation.
- However, investment, breeding, research, innovation, and digital solutions can also significantly contribute to making the use of soils more sustainable.

- Above all, better data on the condition of soils is needed as a basis for policy making.
- Farmers' access to training and extension services for the purpose of evaluating soil conditions and sustainably managing soils is to be ensured. In this context, the Ministers welcome the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, which is managed by the FAO.
- Finally, the Ministers would like to raise public awareness of the relevance of healthy soils for healthy food. In this regard, World Soil Day is of particular importance.

Dear Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity to present this year's GFFA Communique. Dear Participants, thank you very much for your attention.