

**INTERVENTION BY DR MOHAMAD MALIKI BIN OSMAN,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
DEFENCE, SINGAPORE, AT 39TH SESSION OF FAO
CONFERENCE ON TUESDAY, 9 JUN 2015 IN ROME, ITALY**

Introduction

1. On behalf of the Singapore delegation, I would like to thank the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairs, FAO's Director-General, Jose Graziano da Silva, for their leadership of the Conference.

2. Local agriculture is a pillar of Singapore's food security. The government provides a range of support for the sustainability of our farms to contribute to Singapore's food supply. The plenary theme is thus in step with Singapore's own food security journey as a nation. Let me share Singapore's experience.

3. This year marks Singapore's 50th anniversary of independence. In the 1960s, Singapore's supply of primary produce such as poultry, eggs and pork, came mostly from local farmers who worked on close to one-fifth of our total land area. But since the 1980s, rapid urban development has led to less land for agriculture, which takes up less than 1% of Singapore's total land area now.

4. Agriculture in Singapore thus has to adapt and transform, not just due to limited land and labour resources, but also to be more resilient to climatic, environmental, animal health and food safety risks. Our farmers need to adopt innovative technologies and automation that are labour, water and energy efficient, reduce the exposure to external risks, and give higher yields. Farmers must also adopt good agricultural practices to produce safe, good quality produce that can command reasonable market prices so that they can be commercially sustainable.

5. The Government's assistance and support are crucial to help our farmers. The Singapore Government plays an important role in improving the overall livelihood of farmers by providing extension services and investment in R&D. We also implement schemes to assist the farmers and educated them on matters relating to agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries.

6. Last year, the Singapore Government launched a S\$63 million Agriculture Productivity Fund (APF) to help farmers conduct R&D on new and enhanced technologies to expand their production capabilities and boost productivity, as well as invest in transformational farming systems. With Government support, the farmers play an active and important role in modernising their farming systems and technology to boost their productivity.

A good example is vertical farming, which uses less land and manpower and gives higher yields.

Need for Change

7. Our farmers could suffer significant losses if they are not careful and ready for change. To be resilient, competitive and sustainable, the agriculture sector needs to adopt new technologies and undertake institutional changes. The need for change also applies to all small-holder farmers in developing countries.

Network and Knowledge Transfer

8. Singapore recognises the importance of technology transfer and information sharing in keeping pace with global agriculture developments and learning from best practices. Therefore, we encourage technology transfer and information sharing regionally and internationally.

As a responsible and constructive member of the international community, Singapore aims to play our part in strengthening global food security, and share our experience with other countries.

9. I am pleased to share that Singapore signed a MOU with the FAO on technical cooperation yesterday. This partnership serves as a platform to support capacity development and increase expertise, knowledge and technology transfer between Singapore and FAO, as well as with other countries, in areas such as food security and food safety. Indeed, recent food scares such as reports of plastic rice and excessive lead in instant noodles underscore the need for countries to be vigilant and to strengthen their food safety systems and at the same time share information and intelligence with each other. With the MOU, we look forward to collaborations with FAO to protect consumers and contribute to global food safety and security.

Conclusion

10. To conclude, I look forward to the meaningful outcomes of our discussions and wish all participants a fruitful and successful Conference. Thank you.
