

**Statement delivered by  
Ms Cathrine Stephenson  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia  
on the occasion of the  
41<sup>st</sup> Session of the FAO Conference, Rome, Italy (22-29 June 2019)  
26 June 2019**

Good morning distinguished delegates,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Australian Minister for Agriculture was honoured to deliver the response to the Frank McDougall Lecture on the first day of the Conference on Saturday and to speak to this Conference's theme.

Australia would again like to congratulate the Director-General elect Dr Qu and also thank the outgoing Director-General for his leadership over the last 8 years.

Australia has been and will continue to be, committed to the work of the FAO. At a time when the global rules-based order is under threat, strong multilateral cooperation is critical. FAO, as the only globally representative body dealing with food and agriculture issues, is the primary forum facilitating this cooperation in the agricultural sector, and all countries stand to benefit from its work.

#### Global Challenges

The Sustainable Development Goals provide the framework for the international community to act to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Working to achieve these goals, especially to alleviate food insecurity and create resilient rural livelihoods, FAO must focus on its comparative advantages.

It must also strengthen and expand partnerships with other international organisations and the private sector and be responsive to the priorities of its member countries.

#### FAO's comparative advantage

FAO is the United Nation's largest specialised agency, although it cannot be everything to everyone, and it must focus its attention on its strengths of technical capacity and international standard setting work.

FAO's provision of statistics and technical and policy advice, particularly to developing countries, helps governments to develop and grow their agriculture sectors and address the broader issues that affect food security.

FAO also performs important normative and standard setting work for plant health and food safety, contributing to transparent and rules-based global agricultural trade, which underpins rural livelihoods across the world—in developed and developing economies alike.

This work is being supported through FAO's decentralised offices. This network presents an opportunity to increase staff coverage across geographically dispersed regions such as the South-West Pacific, where animal and plant health standards, food security and nutrition are key priority areas needing technical assistance.

#### FAO's need to work collaboratively

Given the immense scale of the challenges we face, FAO cannot work in isolation. As a provider of global public knowledge, with a core budget that has remained nominally flat for some time, FAO must find ways to

sustainably fund its activities. This is where collaboration with other international organisations and partnerships, especially with the private sector, are essential.

By facilitating private sector participation, FAO can gain access not only to more financial resources, but also to entrepreneurship and new scientific and technological innovations. This collaboration will also create the potential to improve links between small-scale producers and value chains - expanding the development potential of agricultural production.

#### Member-led organisation

The election of a new Director-General provides an opportunity to shape the relationship between the FAO Secretariat and member countries, so that members can drive the policy agenda in line with their national agricultural priorities.

#### Close

Australia remains committed to its engagement with FAO, and looks forward to working with our new Director-General in the years ahead. We emphasise that FAO must continue to evolve and make efficient use of its resources so that it can help member countries respond to the significant global challenges we all face.

By focusing on its comparative advantages as a provider of technical and policy advice and an international standard setting body, and by collaborating with other international organisations and the private sector, FAO will be able to maximize its global impact.

Thank you.