

Statement delivered by
Her Excellency Anna Gembicka
Secretary of State for Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Poland
on the occasion of the
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15 June 2021

*Dear Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

We find ourselves at a time when external factors have a strong impact on agriculture and food systems as a whole. These factors cover in particular: accelerating climate change, economic and health crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and a growing human pressure on the natural environment. Moreover, we still deal with the problems of unequal global access to food, inadequate diet of a large part of the world's population, and with the difficulties farmers face trying to make a living.

Only ten years remain to achieve the 2030 (Twenty Thirty) Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. A new, better food policy is therefore needed. It is also urgent to coordinate measures to support the transformation of agri-food systems, in order to make them resilient. We need to act quickly and globally to make food systems sustainable. The FAO should play a leading role in the relevant international work streams.

Food systems are very complex and diverse, and they require the development of multi-dimensional instruments adapted to the challenges. Their transformation is conditioned by robust, evidence-based, inclusive, and ambitious political decisions.

There is a growing recognition that the challenges we face are interlinked. This implies the need to develop internally-consistent policies addressing food systems. However, consistency alone has little value if the goals are not sufficiently ambitious.

The challenges identified above are addressed by a model of a multifunctional and sustainable agriculture. Such a model guarantees food security, supplies public goods, including environmental ones, promotes the development of entrepreneurship associated with the agri-food sector, and stimulates social and territorial development (including cultural functions of rural areas). Only efficient and coordinated public institutions have the potential to manage public policies in such a way as to respond effectively to emerging challenges.

Development of national food strategies is one of the methods to achieve greater consistency of policies. These strategies should enable reaching of sustainable development goals at the local level. When developing them, countries must answer the following questions: What is the real efficiency of the current food system? What is the role of the policy? Where are the barriers in the current system? What factors are an obstacle to implementing a better policy?

National food strategies should respond to these challenges, taking into account solutions resulting from modern communication methods, scientific achievements, new technologies, and digitalisation.

The new EU Common Agricultural Policy will support European farmers in the process of transformation. The “*farm to fork*” strategy which is an important element of the European Green Deal, sets out a strategic vision for the change in food production and consumption. But Europe alone is not enough. The transformation of agri-food systems must take place at the global level. The EU and FAO cooperate in the field of agriculture, fisheries, forestry, biodiversity, food security, food crises, and food safety. If we want to avert the threats we are facing, a similar cooperation between all states is needed.

One of the actions Poland has taken to transform our food systems is the development of a food identification system. It provides participants of the food chain with transparent and reliable information on how and where food is produced. This is a bottom-up initiative of the food chain participants.

The aim of the project is to develop a digital food traceability and food authenticity system at key stages of the supply chain, or “from farm to fork”. The stakeholders expect a number of benefits from the implementation of such a system. It will provide a wide spectrum of food information as well as integrate the currently operating reference databases. Thus, the Polish agri-food sector will gain a system providing high-quality, reliable and not falsified data on the food product. This information will ultimately also be made available to consumers, among other users, to help them make conscious consumer choices. The project has been integrated with the national preparations for the UN Food Systems Summit 2021.

We hope that the mobilisation of the world community, related to the preparatory work streams of the summit, will allow to develop concrete solutions, enabling the implementation of our common goals set out in the 2030 (Twenty Thirty) Agenda .

Thank you for your attention.