

BELGIUM

Rome, June 14-18, 2021

Speech by HE Ambassador Frank Carruet on the occasion of the 42nd FAO Conference

Director General,

Ministers and Secretaries of State,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Belgium welcomes the central theme of the 42nd Conference, "Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: From Strategy to Action". We acknowledge the need to urgently transform our food systems, and relevant action to be taken in order to be able to provide sufficient nutritious food for all, without further damaging our planet and in a way future generations will be able to provide themselves with nutritious food. Strong agricultural and food governance and effective global frameworks are key to supporting the transition towards sustainable and resilient food systems. Belgium welcomes the commitment of FAO in this regard.

A transformation to more sustainable food systems is also a priority of the Belgian Development Cooperation Belgium hereby focuses on ecological, social and economic sustainability ; by promoting more sustainable practices such as agro-ecology, prioritizing local value chains and local "territorial" markets, promoting sustainable use of natural resources and more effective use of ecosystem services is essential in the light of Climate Change.

Unfortunately, ongoing conflict and climate change in combination with COVID-19 continue pushing millions of people in extreme poverty and food insecurity. We need to be aware that it is unequal access rather than insufficient global production that is leaving people hungry. Women make an essential contribution to ensuring food security and nutrition worldwide but are still disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Achieving gender equality therefore remains critical for empowering women and girls to play their full role in the transformation of food systems. In this regard, Belgium continues to advocate that the transition of global food systems must be equitable, inclusive, and based on a human rights approach. Belgium aims for making food systems more inclusive and to address inequalities to ensure that marginalized and vulnerable groups such as smallholders, women and youth enjoy the benefits and opportunities that food systems can bring and to support sustainable development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the vulnerabilities and failures of our food systems, and the urgent need to build back better. It emphasized the need for resilient, sustainable and evidence-based food systems, through which the increase of poverty in the world can be prevented and vulnerable groups such as small farmers, women and youth, among others, can be helped to recover from the global health emergency.

The challenges the world is facing, reinforced by the ongoing pandemic, underscores how important multilateral cooperation is as a means to find solutions. We need a strong FAO, implementing the United Nations Development System Reform, - especially at the country level - in order to succeed in the fight against hunger and in transforming food systems to be far more sustainable.

The UN Food Systems Summit will serve as a critical contribution to the Decade of Action and to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs. The Summit will be a catalyst for a food system transformation. We urge FAO to continue playing an important role in the preparation of the summit. A bottom-up and inclusive approach is required. Belgium hopes the UNFSS will lead to concrete results and follow up actions , that should guide FAO's future work. Furthermore, Belgium would like to stress that, if we want to achieve the Agenda 2030, the inclusion of the private sector and new ways of financing are key.

To conclude, Belgium stands firm in its ambition to accelerate progress on SDG 2. FAO is a longstanding and important partner for Belgium. There are many areas where Belgium's and FAO's development visions align, the new strategic framework to be approved during this 42nd Conference confirms the alignment of the FAO and Belgian priorities.

Belgium always chooses the modalities that allow FAO to work in the most efficient way possible: multi-year commitment in the form of unrestricted voluntary contributions through the Multipartner Programme Support Mechanism (FMM) and contributions to the FAO Special Fund for Emergency Activities (SFERA), to enable FAO to respond with enormous flexibility and speed to humanitarian crises. We look forward to a continued strong cooperation with FAO.