

Statement of the Honourable Mr El-Said El-Qosair
Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of the Arab Republic of Egypt
To FAO Conference 42nd Session
Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: from Strategy to Action
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Chairperson of the Conference,
Excellency Director-General of FAO,
Distinguished Representatives,
Honourable Ministers, Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives, Heads of Delegation and Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To begin with, it is my pleasure to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its Director-General, his Excellency Dr Qu Dongyu, for the gracious invitation to participate in this 42nd Session of the FAO Conference. I also take this opportunity to thank the FAO Director-General for his efforts to enhance the internal administration of the organization, launch initiatives and foster cooperation with Members, the private sector, academia and civil society. In this context, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to FAO for the support it has provided the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation to update Egypt's Sustainable Agricultural Development Strategy towards 2030 and draw up its implementation plan, which was published in October 2020 as part of the Technical Cooperation Programme.

On behalf of the delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt I convey greetings to all Conference participants. I am positive that the work of the Conference will meet with success and contribute to enhanced cooperation among our countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to outline the vision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation concerning the issues on the Conference agenda:

The FAO strategy based on the approach of Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: from Strategy to Action, and its presence on our agenda, reflects the importance of the decisions we are taking to enhance sustainable agricultural development and achieve food security in order to build a better future for our countries, a future without hunger and malnutrition. This demands that we, as governments, make a stronger commitment to ensure improved nutrition and the provision of healthy diets for all.

As you know, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic there were more than 690 million people living in hunger. The pandemic has increased this number by another 132 million people. This places the spotlight on the world's food systems, since this number may only increase further in coming years and decades as a result of prolonged conflicts, water scarcity, rising population growth, climate change and lack of natural resources.

Achieving the UN's second Sustainable Development Goal – Zero Hunger – is a hugely important political necessity for numerous reasons. Most importantly, it underlies social peace in the states of the region and represents one of the most difficult challenges facing the region because of severe constraints on land and water available for food production together with the fact that developing nations are the world's major food importers. Hence the importance of finding ways to take advantage of good governance and cooperation on the regional and global level through a focus on four key areas: trade and technological innovation, investment, provision of aid, and food systems. We need to highlight the areas that call for new partnerships between the public and private sectors and look into the role that governments must undertake to enable a rethinking of food production, exchange, consumption and trade.

The Second International Conference on Nutrition, which was jointly organized by FAO and the World Health Organization in 2014, has already affirmed the importance of adopting a food systems approach that aims to promote healthy diets. This was one of the six points set out for the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, which was declared by the UN General Assembly in April 2016, and which endorsed food systems characterized by flexibility, adaptability and sustainability as the means to foster healthy diets from farm to table. This approach comprises supply-side food policies (production, harvesting, processing, trade and marketing) and demand-side policies, including advocacy and education around good nutrition and policies related to foodstuff pricing.

The lack of food and lack of physical exercise are undoubtedly getting worse in developing countries in comparison with advanced societies, where these problems are not prevalent. Hence the importance of Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: from Strategy to Action to encourage a healthy, balanced diet coupled with physical activity. National studies in Egypt have shown that child malnutrition is a major problem, particularly in rural areas. It is worth noting that the 2014 Second International Conference on Nutrition in Rome addressed the fact that the problem of overweight and obesity was present in most countries in the world - developed and developing countries alike.

The issues that stem from agricultural adaptation to climate change in our countries pose a threat to the human right to food, especially in rural areas, where the population is particularly exposed to the effects of climate change. Let me assure you of Egypt's commitment to the climate talks process and of the necessity for advanced states to fulfil the pledges they made at the 2015 Paris Climate Change Conference to provide financial support to developing countries and to support

mechanisms for technology transfer for capacity building and adaptation to the impact of climate change with a particular focus on agricultural sectors and smallholder agricultural producers.

The Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation welcomes the Hand-in-Hand Initiative launched by FAO Director-General his Excellency Dr Qu Dongyu and its five principles to help achieve SDG 1 (eradication of poverty) and SDG 2 (ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition). We also welcome the consolidation of efforts across UN organizations. Egypt hopes to be a target of this important initiative, in light of the efforts the Egyptian government is making to fight poverty and end hunger and given that Egypt has a high population density.

The Arab Republic of Egypt supports the Conference Draft Resolution, proposed at the 27th session of the Committee on Agriculture, for the UN system to mark 2026 as International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. Egypt also supports the Draft Resolution, proposed by the Committee on Agriculture at the same session, on the UN system marking 2027 as International Year of Date Palm. My country further supports declaring May 12 as International Day of Plant Health as a permanent outcome of the International Year of Plant Health to raise awareness about the importance of plant health when dealing with issues of hunger and poverty.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Egypt's strategy for agricultural development is based on optimal usage of available agricultural resources in terms of land and water, and of capital, administration and technology. The aim is to achieve an annual agricultural growth rate of around 4%, a higher level of food security, the provision of the agricultural raw materials needed for national industries and to increase exports, and improved incomes and living standards for farmers and the rural population. To these ends, the strategy is based on a number of axes, most importantly, **vertical agricultural expansion** by boosting the unit productivity of land and water and developing livestock, poultry and fisheries resources, **horizontal agricultural expansion** by the reclamation and cultivation of 1.5 million feddans (6,300 km²), the national project for irrigation water rationalization, the integrated control of plant pests and diseases, expansion of agroprocessing, recycling of agricultural residues, increasing fresh and processed exports, incentivizing Egyptian, Arab and foreign private investment in agriculture, support for agricultural institutions particularly in the fields of research and extension, marketing and credit, cooperation with civil society NGOs, and support for the role of women in agricultural and rural development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, allow me once again to convey my greetings and thanks to FAO. Egypt looks forward to continued active partnership with FAO and intensified cooperation under the stewardship of Dr Qu Dongyu. Egypt affirms its backing and support for this venerable organization, full of faith in

its efforts to achieve sustainable agricultural and rural development and food security on the international, regional and country levels. Furthermore, Egypt places its agricultural capacity and expertise at the service of FAO's programmes and projects, especially in the countries of the global south.

Thank you and let there be peace and God's mercy and blessings upon you all.