

**Statement delivered by
His Excellency Petros Xenophontos, Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and
Environment of Cyprus
on occasion of the
43rd Session of the FAO Conference (1-7 July 2023)
3 July 2023**

Madam Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

I am honored to represent the Republic of Cyprus at the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference.

Cyprus aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by Spain on behalf of the EU and its 27 Member States.

Let me, first of all, congratulate the Director-General, Dr. Qu Dongyu, for his re-election. We wish him every success and look forward to continue working actively and constructively together in the coming years to ensure that FAO supports Members in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Water is a foundational component of agrifood systems, which is facing increasingly complex challenges. Water scarcity, droughts, floods, and water pollution, impede our efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Increasing pressure on limited water resources has diminished the availability of water for the sustainable development of agrifood systems.

To overcome these challenges, we must recognize the urgent need for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), which is the cornerstone of comprehensive and effective water governance and vital for transforming agrifood systems sustainably to achieve the SDGs. We must advocate for the integration of water resources management at all levels, across all sectors, including all stakeholders. Enhanced water governance can lead to both the long-term sustainability of water resources management and the use, and agrifood systems that are more effective, resilient and equitable.

Agriculture, as the world's larger water user, must make its case for its fair share of water resources and become part of the solution. We need to ensure that water is allocated efficiently, equitably and sustainably to ensure food security, mitigation and adaptation to floods, biodiversity and wetland conservation and address agriculture-induced water pollution. It is crucial to prioritize inclusive and effective water governance.

Cyprus faces the severe impact of climate change, which increases significantly the problem of water scarcity and droughts already faced on the island. Through its National Sustainability Strategy and Action Plans and the tools provided by the new Common Agricultural Policy, the European Green Deal and its initiatives and strategies, Cyprus paves the way for the efficient transformation of its agrifood systems. Furthermore, through the implementation and coordination of the River Basin and Drought Management Plans developed through the framework of the EU Water Framework Directive and the Flood Risk Management Plan of the EU Floods Directive, Cyprus aims to proceed with an integrated water and flood management approach on a river basin level.

To that end, our Government continues to invest in the efficient management of our water resources, utilization of non-conventional water sources like reclaimed waste water and desalinated sea water, applies water-saving measures, promotes education and awareness campaigns, supports the use of modern

irrigation techniques, invests in water infrastructure, implements soil conservation practices, invests in early warning systems, floodplain mapping, natural water retention and flood water storage in upstream areas, and flood-resistant infrastructure, and advocates for diversified farming systems, resilient crop varieties, and agroforestry to recover from flood events and maintain sustainable agricultural practices. Moreover, we promote cooperation with our neighbouring countries, which can become the driving force for knowledge sharing and technology transfer, in the field of water scarcity.

We urge FAO to develop innovative initiatives for water management in agrifood systems, including flood and disaster risk management and utilizing flooding water, reclaimed waste water and desalinated water. Water management Integration across sectors is essential. Furthermore, we ask FAO to implement actions for flood and integrated land and water management by mobilizing necessary resources.

Your excellencies, dear colleagues, dear friends,

Feeding a growing global population by producing more with less will be a great challenge, as both chronic and acute food insecurity have increased. Our vision for a better tomorrow will only become a reality if we all work together.

Let us commit to robust and transformative actions to address the pressing water challenges in our agrifood systems. By embracing integrated water resources management, we can ensure food security, protect livelihoods, and safeguard the well-being of future generations. Now is the time to act and pave the way to secure a sustainable and water-secure future for all!

Thank you for your attention.