

Statement delivered by
His Excellency Mohamad Sabu
Minister for Agriculture and Food Security of Malaysia
on the occasion of the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference (1-7 July 2023)
3 July 2023

Madame Chair,

Excellencies,

distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I join others in congratulating Dr Qu Dongyu, on your re-election as Director-General of FAO for the second term. Malaysia welcomes the overarching theme of this year's FAO Conference, Integrated Water Resources Management, which includes overcoming water challenges in agriculture, and integrated resource management for resilient agrifood systems and rural development.

The theme should serve as a reminder to all FAO Member States of what needs to be done and the long road we have. Ladies and gentlemen, it is imperative that we recognize the impact that water scarcity has on agricultural practice. The world is facing water scarcity and more than 3 billion people live in agricultural areas with very high or high levels of water shortage.

In addition, about 1.2 billion live in areas where there is a high drought frequency in rain fed, cropland and pastureland areas of high water stressed integrated areas. In Malaysia the agricultural sector contributed 6.6 percent - the equivalent to USD 21.7 billion to the Malaysian GDP. The agrifood industry currently represents 3.5 percent of Malaysian GDP with a value of USD 11.25 billion in 2022.

In this relation, Malaysia firmly believes that water resources should be strategically managed to sustain agrifood systems that are more productive, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

Ladies and gentlemen, the integrated water resources management, IWRM, is crucial for addressing water scarcity and transforming agriculture, as well as for reducing risk from flood. In this regard, Malaysia acknowledges the adverse impact of climate change and agriculture practice, particularly the competition for water resources for agriculture, with heavy usage of water that directly contributes to stress as river water levels fall. As for reduction of that risk, we have relevant experience where the national flood forecasting and warning programme has been established for selected major river basins to provide early warning of flooding events.

Water resources being one of the crucial farming inputs of the agrifood sector has been managed more efficiently through the Malaysian National Agrifood Policy 2.0 for 2021 until 2030. This is reflected through several initiatives to promote sustainable water use in the agriculture, which includes the promotion of water efficient irrigation techniques, such as drip irrigation and the use of precision farming technologies.

In addition, Malaysia has seen efficient progress in increasing agricultural productivity through the implementation of technology and innovative agricultural practice, that promotes sustainability.

Through the National Agrifood Policy 2.0, as part of our action to expedite the development of agrifood related infrastructure, particularly to increase accountability for the management of infrastructure, Malaysia actively continues to increase the investment in agrifood related infrastructure, particularly for the purpose of irrigation.

Further, in advancing towards sustainable agriculture practice, Malaysia has implemented a robust certification scheme, namely Good Agricultural Practice (MyGAP) and MYORGANIC – by incorporating the element of ESD into this certification it helps the stakeholder to add more responsible and less damaging in agricultural practice for future success.

Malaysia recognizes the population growth and urbanization, industrialization and expansion of irrigated agriculture and increasing demand and pressure on water resources, beside contributing to the rising water position, the infrastructure and facilities are challenges to the agrifood industry.

Thank you very much.