

Statement delivered by
Her Excellency Alexis Taylor
Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs of the United States of America
on the occasion of the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference (1-7 July 2023)
3 July 2023

Thank you, Chair Bibeau.

The world continues to face unprecedented global food security challenges, commodity shocks, climate events, conflicts, supply chain issues, and rising energy and input costs have driven up the cost of feeding people around the world. Furthermore, as FAO's data analysis shows and as recognized by the FAO Council in multiple decisions, the devastating effects of Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine has only exacerbated global food insecurity. Russia must end this war and it should do so immediately.

We commend the UN and Türkiye's efforts in brokering the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which has facilitated the delivery of more than 31 million metric tons of food from Ukraine to the global marketplace since July. We support calls for its renewal and expansion. The United States commends the high-quality programmes and support UN agencies provide and encourages continued effective investment and technical advice that is necessary to address this food crisis.

The status quo cannot meet the unprecedented needs now facing us, nor can it put us on the path to achieve the sustainable development goals of zero hunger by 2030. We strongly encourage Member States to increase their contributions to UN agencies.

Critically, we need to work together to keep food and agriculture markets open and avoid unjustified restrictive trade measures. Export bans or quotas on food or fertilizer only increase market volatility and threaten food and nutrition security at a global scale. We need to examine existing barriers to trade. Rules and standards that may be outdated or not based on science.

The United States remains committed to working with our partners and fellow Member States to confront the continued need for urgent humanitarian assistance and to build more resilient and productive agricultural systems. The United States provided USD 13.5 billion in food security assistance in the past year alone, with more than 7 billion of this total supporting FAO, the World Food Programme, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development Initiatives.

Still, there is a large gap between global resources and global needs stemming from these multiple crises. More efficient, resilient agriculture that produces more with less, less land and water, fewer inputs and resources is essential to meet the world's growing food needs while also alleviating poverty, shrinking agricultural's environmental footprint, and combating climate change.

Agricultural productivity growth can achieve these objectives while also boosting rural livelihoods and local markets. Through innovative new approaches and collaboration with farmers, the private sector in other countries, we can grow agricultural productivity to nourish people and the planet. It is why the United States is investing in climate-smart agriculture at home and around the world and innovative new technologies and approaches.

With technological progress and innovation not only can we improve agricultural yields, but we can also create opportunities to better manage land, soil health, and other inputs needed for agricultural production

while reducing environmental impacts. Water security and responding to climate change are also interconnected.

The United States is committed to advancing sustainable water management, improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and fostering international partnerships to enhance water security. Gender equity and equality are also essential in agricultural systems. As agricultural systems are a major source of income for women around the world investing in women is not just the right thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do. Making our efforts more inclusive will also make them more effective. President Biden has requested more than USD 3 billion to advance gender equity and equality globally.

FAO has a crucial role in addressing these challenges facing our agricultural and food systems. The United States has nearly tripled its voluntary contributions to FAO in response to the global food security crisis. And why the United States supports an increase in FAO's budget at this Conference, we welcome FAO's efforts on climate change, resiliency, science and innovation, and private sector engagement, and the transformative impact such efforts can have on the ground.

Supporting international standard-setting organizations of Codex Alimentarius and the International Plant Production Convention are critical. We welcome efforts to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of FAO including through improved governance, oversight, and management within FAO, including the passage of the code of conduct for voting and adoption of guidelines on the restoration of voting rights for Members and arrears.

We applaud FAO's welcoming of two ongoing reviews of the Organization's operations and encourage timely uptake of their recommendations. In a world facing rising food insecurity, a strong FAO is needed now more than ever. Let us collaborate to build sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems, our futures and the futures of those around us depend on it.

Thank you.