

Honorable Director-General of FAO, Honorable Director-General of WHO

Esteemed Members of FAO / WHO Joint Secretariat,

Dear Colleagues,

It is a big honor for me, as the First Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Georgia, to represent my country on this very important event. I would like to use the given opportunity and briefly discuss current developments in Agricultural sector of Georgia and challenges we are facing on our way of reforms.

Since November 2012, Agriculture and Rural Development has become a national priority for the Government of Georgia. Development of agriculture in a right direction can greatly contribute to the general economic growth and welfare of Georgian people. Policy, carried out by the Government of Georgia in Agricultural sector, aims at creation of an environment that will increase agricultural competitiveness, improve access to domestic and international markets, promote stable growth of agricultural production, ensure food safety and food security for all income groups, eliminate rural poverty through the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas and promote environmental sustainability.

Implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU and DCFTA, which is an integral part of the Association Agreement, will bring many tangible benefits to Georgia. It will open up new trading opportunities and easier access to the EU market – the largest in the world. The Agreement will allow the Georgian economy to catch up with the EU in terms of competitiveness and thereby gradually find its place in the world economy. To that effect, 3-year action plan has been already developed at the state level and I believe, that through our European partners support, we will successively fulfill all the obligations and terms of this agreement. Among other spheres Agreement envisages cooperation in the field of Agriculture and Rural Development. The application of the EU standards will bring significantly more choice and higher quality products to Georgian consumers and make Georgia a more attractive place for foreign investors.

Through the intensive discussions and consultations among major stakeholders, such as: relevant state institutions, EU experts, NGOs, private sector and academia the new Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia (2015-2020) is being developed. In the new Strategy issues related to the food security are considered as of paramount importance and are paid due attention.

It is the Georgian Government intention to ensure sufficient, safe, and nutritious food supply fulfilling the dietary needs and food preferences of the Georgian population and enabling it to live an active and healthy life. The Ministry of Agriculture will continue to monitor food security but will also support small-scale family farms through the provision of mechanisms to reduce their risk and raise incomes. Ministry will also encourage a gradual movement away from subsistence farming towards commercial agriculture to facilitate the needed investment. The longer term objective is to improve rural living standards and eventually eradicate poverty. This includes creating decent prospects for economic employment and social life in rural areas and

for implementing programs targeted at farm, and particularly, off-farm job creation in rural areas. Consideration will be given to the specific needs of the elderly, women, youth and disadvantaged groups including the development of alternative workplaces for those people moving out of farming.

The Government will develop and implement an early warning system for food security and in particular for the most vulnerable regions and parts of the population, continue to improve the information collection and analysis system and train data collectors and analysts. A rapid and effective method of response to food crises will be developed, including for food distribution, and in line with the National Plan of Response to Emergency Situations and in association with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, other relevant Ministries and international partners.