

Statement delivered by

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2 July 2025

Distinguished Ministers and Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of my Government and the Ministry of Agriculture that I am honoured to represent, I present my gratitude to FAO to participate in this 44th FAO Conference. Let me also applaud the organizing committee for the initiative and hard work it has taken to convene this important session at a decisive point in time. For a broad spectrum of synergy and cooperation, allow me to highlight the status of agriculture and food in Eritrea.

Chairperson, I will be very brief. Eritrea, the land of indomitable spirit, spirited people, situated in the Horn of Africa, with 85 to 90 percent subsistence farming population, that is about 60 percent of the total population, is directly involved in agriculture. Eritrea and FAO have a long-lasting partnership in the rural agricultural development. The partnership between both parties have started right after the country's independence in 1994.

Since then, a number of agricultural development projects that focus on natural resource management, integrated crop and livestock development, fisheries development and institutional capacity development support have been satisfactorily implemented and have contributed to the priority goal of attaining safe and nutritious food in the country and we thank FAO for their cooperation. Eritrea, with the resource extended so far, has achieved commendable and evident results in areas pertinent to the above status sectors, not forgetting its contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Cognizant of the global commitment of achieving sustainable development goals in five years' time, the impact of global challenges like climate change and manmade conflicts in the area, Eritrea has launched its third agricultural Strategy Development Plan (SDP), which goes from 2024 to 2028, with a theme of achieving safe and nutritious food for everyone, everywhere by 2028. With a theme of achieving this specific goal, the SDP has five programmes: irrigation and natural resource management, crop development, livestock development, cross-cutting programmes such as sustainable and integrated livelihood and agribusiness management support, and institutional and personal capacity development.

These programmes exactly resonate with this year's theme of no one is left behind. With support of FAO also, it is also necessary to mention that, since 2013, the Ministry of Agriculture in Eritrea has developed and implemented multiple strategies, including Small and Medium Commercial Farmers (SMCF), and a minimum integrated household agricultural package promoting exemplary farmers, cluster farming and new small productive farm plot initiatives. This new strategy is a small plot strategy, whose objective is to improve livelihood of a small-holder farmer and to produce nutrition that is equivalent to 1 000 square metre farm plot.

This strategy will be implemented in rain-fed and water-stressed areas. Farming families in these areas are expected to intensively cultivate crops and vegetables in 1 000 square metre plots. Farmers are now involved in a locally made top-bar beehive in that area for honey production, back-yard poultry and the like. And Eritrea is part of the Sub-Saharan Peninsula, characterized by frequent drought and erratic, unpredictable rains.

The Ministry of Agriculture reports of 2024 show that, so far, over 12 000 of the small-sector farms piloted and promising results have been recorded in first round, with 0.9 tonnes in that small farm plot with an average of half a tonne per hectare. The Eritrea-FAO partnership and the projects implemented

since 1994 have evolved to meet the domestic demands and needs, as well as they have responded to the requirements set in the global Sustainable Development Goals.

The results or impact of the development interventions thus far have evidently and significantly contributed to the improvement and well-being of the targeted communities that include women-led households and youth affected by natural and manmade disasters. Hence, for a wider and more inclusive and sustainable impact on agricultural development and transformation, timely collaboration and continuous support of FAO is very much appreciated and is highly in need in the area context.

To conclude, Eritrea is and will always be keen to work with FAO towards achieving the global and national goals, objectives to achieve safe and nutritious food to everyone, everywhere. This is closely related to the strategic plan of FAO expressed with a better production, better nutrition, better environment and a better life. Moreover, Eritrea is also committed to combat desertification, loss of natural resources, soil degradation and post-harvest loss that has directly affected or impacted on agriculture and marine resources and, hence to the improvement all of the resilience of livelihood of communities whose well-being is dependent on these results.

I would like to mention only a little bit also on the pests that are also an issue in Eritrea. Issues of pests like locusts, with desert locusts and tree locusts, that are in the Horn of Africa with a lot of burden. Eritrea has been able to achieve, to control, prevent it very easily, with the support of FAO.

I appreciate and thank the good work of FAO and I thank you very much for that.