

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE OF LITHUANIA
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AT THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS PRE-SUMMIT
“NATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION”

26-28 July 2021

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honour to address you today at the UN Food Systems Pre-Summit. Let me begin by commending the UN Secretary-General's initiative in partnership with Prime Minister of Italy to convene the UN Food Systems Pre-Summit in Rome to share global vision on food systems and to launch bold actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, so as to provide sufficient, safe and affordable food for all. Strong agricultural and food governance and effective global frameworks are key to supporting the transition towards sustainable and resilient food systems. Lithuania welcomes the commitment of FAO in this regard.

It should be emphasised that the challenges associated with the transformation of food systems are closely interlinked with the wider sustainability, biodiversity and climate challenges the world is facing and COVID-19 has shown how fragile the whole system is. Global efforts should be aimed at both encouraging the active involvement and addressing the responsibilities of all actors at all stages of the food system: production, processing, storage, distribution, consumption and disposal. For the food system to be sustainable, it is essential to ensure sustainable functioning of each of these areas.

Sustainability is widely recognized as among the most significant global challenges facing humanity in the 21st century. In this context, we are delighted that recently reached political agreement on the EU's Common Agriculture Policy will strengthen the European agri-food system, making it more sustainable and fairer and supports the transition to greener and more climate-friendly farming, and at the same time ensuring competitiveness of the EU farmers.

Moreover, last year, the EC announced the Farm-to-Fork Strategy (F2F) as well as Biodiversity strategy, which are in line with the provisions of the Communication on the European Green Deal, with a sustainable food production system as its cornerstone. These important strategies also contribute to the European Commission's action in pursuit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Direction how to proceed the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy is already set in our national legislation. To speed up and facilitate this transformation and ensure that all foods

placed on the EU market become increasingly sustainable, the Commission will present a proposal for a legislative framework for sustainable food system by the end of 2023.

Lithuania is committed to continuing its ongoing efforts to develop a sustainable and resilient food system and to achieve greater integration of sustainable food production in our country, the Ministry of Agriculture together with stakeholder institutions and partners actively participates in the activities of the EU project network FIT4FOOD 2030. The project aims to combine science and innovation, increase public involvement in the development of a sustainable food system, and encourage private investment in the development of quality food products and environmentally friendly technologies.

It is also important to note that the development of organic farming production in our country is foreseen as one of the priority steps in the development of a sustainable production system. The targeted development of this production system contributes to the preservation of biological diversity, ensuring food safety, and allows minimising the reliance on external resources. The strategic operational guidelines of the Ministry include the ambition to double the organic production area by 2030. This will also contribute to reduction of chemicals in agricultural sector.

Lithuania attaches great importance to investing in consumers in agriculture and food production sector. To ensure the sustainable functioning of the entire food production chain, we apply measures aimed at the wider opening of local markets to farmers who directly sell their organic products to local consumers. For example, in cooperation with pre-school education institutions, we implement projects where children are offered organic food in educational institutions, and the price increase resulting from the environmental friendliness of production is covered from the state budget. This contributes to the reduced use of logistic, financial and natural resources, shorter food transport times, which means that fresher and more nutritious products reach consumers.

Change towards achieving sustainable and resilient food systems must be based on a stronger scientific basis. It is of vital importance to expand the implementation of scientific solutions, and in particular to encourage private business investment in research and innovation through the development of advanced products and environmentally friendly production technologies. In due course, we will pay incomparably more attention to research of food systems, promotion of healthy eating and the development of a critical consumer.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a challenging time for our sector but only by working together and with the invaluable support of the FAO can we achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, so let us turn aspiration into action and build a sustainable, climate-neutral and resource-efficient future for this and future generations.

Thank you very much.