

**Statement delivered by
The Honourable Jabulani Clement Mabuza
Minister for Agriculture of the Kingdom of Eswatini
on the occasion of the
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24 June 2019**

Mr Chairman,
Director-General of FAO and Director-General Elect,
Honourable Ministers,
Heads of Intergovernmental Organisations and UN Agencies;
Heads of Delegations;
FAO staff,
Ladies and Gentleman,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to have the opportunity to address you at this very important Conference. First of all I want to start by extending the warm greetings to you all on behalf of their Majesties, the government and the people of the Kingdom of Eswatini.

I thank all of you and those who have been part of this important Conference before for the good work done to this date. This Organization has the most important task than any other organization, as it deals with issues of ensuring that the entire world is food secure. We all know that without food there is no life. However, it is unfortunate that every day we are faced with new challenges as we try to find solutions for how to make every individual food secure. The effect of climate change, which has resulted in droughts, floods, new pests and diseases needs our coordinated attention.

Mr Chairman,

Our agriculture in the Kingdom is characterised by a large number of smallholder farmers with very few large-scale farmers. This means that we are predominantly in a subsistence production system. The consumption of processed products is high and increasing every day yet there is little food processing and value addition taking place within our boundaries. We are still dependent on imports, even for our staple crops. In recognition of the need to ensure food and nutrition security for our people, we have put in place programmes that are aimed at stimulating production especially in terms of increasing productivity per unit area. The programme focuses mainly on making farm inputs easily accessible to the farmer and facilitating marketing of end products. Our food prices are also not stable as they are influenced by high input costs, which are mainly imported.

Mr Chairman,
Ladies and Gentleman,

In trying to address the issues raised above, a number of programmes have been developed in recent years. This has resulted in a paradigm shift towards commercialization and the agriculture sector is considered the backbone of the economy. The main commercial crops being sugar cane, fruits and vegetables. For livestock, it is mainly beef and poultry, which are at the commercial scale.

To support the commercialization drive, the Government has invested in creating an enabling environment through large-scale water projects. Currently, a number of potential water harvesting sites

are being investigated with the aim of increasing areas under irrigation. This is mainly to address the issue of climate change which is having a serious effect on our rain-fed production system. In addition, we are opening up to investors with an interest to embarking on agro-processing. We are seeing some positive results and we hope to be a major player in the economy within a short period of time.

We are aware that we cannot go far if we do it alone and thus we need support from our international friends. The Kingdom of Eswatini is very grateful for the support of our development partners and international friends and organizations, such as FAO. The new Government has recently unveiled a roadmap towards improving the economic situation in the country. Agriculture has been identified as the pillar of the economic revival and for that reason, we need more and more of your support than ever before. In this connection, we believe that if all programmes can be implemented in the rural areas, it would address the challenge of migration from rural to urban areas.

Lastly, following the call by the nation to be the leader in the economic revival, the Ministry has put in place a robust Action Plan which focuses on production for export markets and increased involvement of the private sector.

I thank you all for listening.