

**Statement delivered by
Her Excellency Vanessa Frazier
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Malta to FAO
on the occasion of the
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Thank you.

I would like to start by thanking the outgoing Director-General, Mr José Graziano da Silva for his work over the past eight years, and welcome the new Director-General Elect, Dr Qu Dongyu and wish him luck for the challenging task ahead.

The new Director-General will be serving at a critical period and have an uphill battle negotiating with partners, the Member States, and stakeholders alike to ensure that FAO plays its part to contributing to meeting SDGs in relation to food and agriculture.

We recognise that our efforts need to be stepped up in order to fulfil such 2030 commitments. This primary economic sector is key in the provision of nourishment to ensure healthy living and is the fulcrum if we want to end hunger. This means that we need to continue working on achieve more sustainable agriculture through the adaptation of sustainable practices that respect our ecosystem and our environment.

Our actions today will effect tomorrow's generation. The fact that the farming community is increasingly becoming an ageing population is a challenge we should seriously address. This poses a major global challenge for food security. Direction is needed towards policy and incentives that encourage technical progress and educate youths in the agricultural and horticultural fields. Take up of technology and innovation in agriculture should be significantly promoted in order to attract young investors to the sector.

In this context, I would like to welcome the launch of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming. Through this initiative, women and youth will be given the importance they deserve. Small and family owned farms can be assisted through their inclusion and recognition as strong and important elements of society. Although scientific progress, economic interventions and international agreements, do positively affect rural development, nothing would be possible without the farmers themselves, as they are the ones who pass on the necessary skills to keep family farms alive and productive.

We acknowledge the notion that improving the agriculture sector, and developing rural areas will stem the need for migration. Even though studies have shown that because of legal and regular migration, the world is richer as migrants become much more productive than they would be had they stayed home, one needs to also take into account that migration out of rural areas can have negative effects as active members of society, and skills in the agriculture sector, are lost.

With regard to Malta, the agricultural sector is mainly comprised of a "one man show" farming operation. Our farmers face a number of difficulties and limitations in relation to the size and fragmentation of land that reduce the competitiveness. Notwithstanding, we support our farmers through the European Union funding from the Common Agricultural Policy to improve their competitiveness by assisting them in investments in physical assets, collaboration, farm development as well as payments to areas facing natural constraints. To mitigate these challenges, a ten-year agriculture policy, which was adopted by the Maltese Government last year, is being implemented with a view to attract more young farmers; promote the sustainability of farming activities; and ensure farmland is properly managed and maintained. This policy also recognises the role of agriculture work as a form of identity, which connects farmers to their ancestors through tradition.

These challenges have not held us back from investing in modern technology. As a small arid island, water scarcity is an overarching issue with particular linkages to the agricultural sector. In cognisant of our climatic conditions and our diseconomies of scale and the need to find alternative sources of

water supply - Malta invested in New Water. The wastewater treated effluent is being polished into irrigated water and distributed to our farmers. So far, we are targeting only a segment of our farmers and plans are unfolding to increase access to more farmers.

Mr. Chair,

Our vision for a better tomorrow will only become a reality if we all work together. Encouraging education and innovation in agriculture will lead to more sustainable rural areas, where people are not forced to leave their countries and where migration will become a choice.

There is no need to create any new international instruments to make this vision a reality. We have to use the tools that are readily available and use this Organisation as a knowledge house and platform to provide us with good examples.

However, we have to act now! It is time to sow the seeds for a better future. Just like the farmers, we cannot expect to harvest the fruit of our labour tomorrow but be patient and keep working hard at it.

Thank you.