

Statement delivered by
His Excellency Inam Karimov
Minister for Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan
on the occasion of the
42nd Session of the FAO Conference (14-18 June 2021)
16 June 2021

Madam Chair,

Mr Director-General,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to attend the 42nd session of FAO Conference and to have a chance to deliver a statement on this important theme when the world is tackling the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with highlighting the importance of sustainable agriculture, the pandemic has also laid the foundation for new international relations to achieve common goals.

Agri-food systems cover all food and non-food means and measures, which constitute the better livelihood and welfare of people. Unfortunately, today due to globalization stresses the system has triggered several threats. Unless we take immediate action, we risk a global food emergency that could have long-term impacts and the transformation is the best way out at all means.

By enthusiastically responding to all global challenges Azerbaijan is today effectively collaborating with FAO and we attach great importance to this collaboration. The strategies and COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme designed by FAO pursue the global agri-food system to be more resilient to shocks during and after the pandemic.

The Azerbaijan Government in its term took necessary measures to avoid risks and have minimum impacts in agriculture and farmer's welfare during the pandemic period. These measures led the country to two percent increased agriculture production in 2020.

Today, our main goal is the reconstruction and development of the liberated territories of Azerbaijan, Karabakh. These territories own full agricultural potential and have been announced as Green Energy Zones. The rural development of these territories will also be based on the Smart Villages concept, which will help transfer these territories to Green Energy Zones. This intention also matches the FAO future plan on a Smart Village Approach by digitalizing one thousand villages, where we can shake a hand for close cooperation with FAO.

Proximity to farmers, use of innovations and good governance are the main principles of our agro development policy. The main goal is also to create a sustainable agri-food system that balances environmental protection, food security, resilient livelihood and healthy nutrition.

Moreover, the transformation done in national public services to farmers following principle "leaving no-one behind". The innovation in particular in agriculture, is a central driving force for achieving a world free from hunger and malnutrition. We are in the process of transforming the country's agriculture to modern and digital agriculture. This transformation is based on the transfer of modern technologies, application of

innovations and data/research development. The recently launched e-agriculture system allows Azerbaijan farmers to have an easy access to all services with mobility anytime and anywhere.

Climate change is one of the main drivers affecting agri-food systems along with other efforts by ensuring the use of innovations, research development and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we can successfully respond to climate threats. I would like to underline that, Azerbaijan has had a successful path in reducing greenhouse gas emissions under the Paris Agreement and will continue for better contribution.

Dear Colleagues,

Once we are talking about achieving a sustainable agri-food system via transformation, the fundamental transformation should also be witnessed in global partnership as well. We should already be ready to come up from strategy to action. The partnership in the framework of the global policies and strategies also must strive to achieve the FAO four betters (better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life) which are anchored to support 2030 SDG Agenda.

The Hand-in-Hand Initiative, From Farm to Fork Strategy, One Health Initiative and other related strategic narratives are the modern guides for responding to the critical drivers affecting agri-food systems. Azerbaijan joins these initiatives with great enthusiasm and ready to effectively collaborate at these multilateral platforms. Furthermore, as a Member State, Azerbaijan is actively taking part in the UN Food Systems Summit work. The extended national dialogues organized at the Member State level will certainly contribute to the global measures for achieving sustainable food systems.

At the end, by highly appreciating the great efforts of the FAO Director-General towards global digitalization activities in agriculture, I feel confident that the work of the Conference will have a substantial impact on global agriculture transformation.

I wish success to the work of the Conference and look forward to prospering cooperation.

Thank you for your attention.