

Statement delivered by
Her Excellency Vincenza Lomonaco
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Italy to FAO
on the occasion of the
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Thank you very much Madam Chair, I have the honour to deliver this speech on behalf of the Minister for Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies, Minister Stefano Patuanelli, who is currently attending a European Union meeting in Lisbon. The message is the following:

Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to speak at the 42nd Session of the FAO Conference.

"Agriculture Food Systems Transformation: from Strategy to Action" is at the centre of ongoing international debate and Italy is honoured to provide its contribution to the discussion as well as to the progress of global policies towards increasingly sustainable models.

For this reason, the Italian G20 Presidency has brought to the attention of the G20 Agriculture Ministers the issue of the sustainability of food systems, which we will discuss in Florence from 16 to 18 September at the G20 Agriculture Ministerial meeting.

On the path towards increasingly sustainable systems, I would like to emphasise two principles: first of all the equal dignity of the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental, and the link between agricultural and food systems and the territories that generate them and determine their specific characteristics.

The distinctive features of individual food systems must be safeguarded and protected because they are the result of the history, culture and geographical origin of the areas. This diversity is the basis of the Mediterranean diet, which distinguishes the evolutionary process of the Italian agri-food system, characterised by products of excellence strongly linked to the territory.

For the future, in line with the European strategies of the Green Deal and Farm to Fork, Italy wants to continue to promote sustainable approaches, taking into account the three dimensions of sustainability, to ensure greater prosperity while safeguarding the planet and people.

Agri-food systems have shown their capacity to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic by ensuring the availability of food.

However, COVID-19 exacerbated pre-existing problems: stagnating prices, rising production costs, difficulty in financing investments, climate change.

These considerations also gave rise to the idea of the Food Coalition, an expression that combines a primary objective, namely access to quality food for all thanks to a method of alliances, complementarity and mutual

aid. An initiative that we strongly support and that will be further explored at the Pre-Food System Summit to be held at the end of July.

Agriculture can be part of the solution but the commitment of all is needed to strengthen agricultural and food systems.

In this process, Italy believes that national and international efforts must go together.

At the national level we are working on the strategy for the future of the agricultural and food sector, focusing on a number of priority objectives, including:

- the competitiveness of the system by favouring the organisation of supply chains and strengthening the connections between producers and consumers;
- improving the climate and environmental performance of production systems. Farmers are being called upon to make increasingly ambitious commitments, and agricultural policy has the task of accompanying them towards sustainable management of natural capital;
- rural areas. The pandemic and the consequent possibility of working from home have encouraged a part of the national population to reconnect with rural areas, highlighting their merits. We want to make these territories more welcoming, capable of offering high standards of quality of life and employment opportunities;
- agricultural work. Safety in the workplace and the protection of workers' rights will be central to Italian policy for more sustainable food systems;
- Finally, innovation, because we are convinced that technology can contribute to strengthening the sustainability and resilience of the Italian agrifood system.

At the international level, I believe it is fundamental and indispensable to consolidate cooperation between countries and the sharing of common objectives.

We cannot overcome the challenges of climate change and the sustainability and resilience of agricultural and food systems on our own. Everyone's effort is needed, and shared work at the multilateral level is essential.

For this reason, I thank FAO for its contribution to the international debate and confirm Italy's willingness to cooperate actively for an increasingly sustainable future.

Thank you very much Madam Chair.