

SLOVAKIA

Statement delivered by

His Excellency Samuel Vlčan

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic

on the occasion of the

42nd Session of FAO Conference (14 – 18 June 2021)

Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director General of FAO,

Mr. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hunger and malnutrition in all its forms - including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity – is, unfortunately, still on the rise. Despite progress made over the past couple of years and even though enough food is produced to feed the entire global population, almost 690 million people still suffer from hunger. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is adding fuel to the fire of this growing hunger crisis and the number of people being pushed to the brink of starvation is projected to rise. As more people go hungry and malnutrition persists, transforming the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about the food and its impact on environment is essential.

Food systems have a critical impact on people's life, health and well-being. They also significantly impact the planet's natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems. Well-functioning and sustainable food systems provide the best opportunity we have to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition and to make progress towards all 17 Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. However, the current nutrition situation points to the world's food systems that are vulnerable, unstable, unsustainable and in a dire need of transformation. And for transformation to be effective, it needs everyone – all stakeholders in food systems – to take action.

We all know that agriculture, food systems, climate change, diets and nutrition are interconnected. Thus, the action to transform food systems and to achieve the food security and nutrition goals must be based on a holistic and systemic approach, taking into consideration wider social, economic and environmental challenges, such as poverty, conflicts, inequalities, climate change, loss of biodiversity,

and deforestation and forest degradation. To tackle the complex challenges, the FAO's new strategic vision of the four betters – better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life – comes at the right time. Under these four betters, I am convinced that FAO will significantly support the transformation of food systems to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

Ladies and gentlemen,

the time is ripe for all of us to move from strategic plans to strategic actions. The Food Systems Summit in September 2021, which will launch bold new actions as part of the United Nations Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, is a turning point in our common journey towards the future we want. Slovakia fully supports the goals of the Food Systems Summit, which are aimed not only at eradicating hunger, but also at reducing diet-related diseases, improving access to safe and nutritious food and healing the planet. I am convinced that the Summit will shape pathways for the transition towards healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems.

Distinguished colleagues,

allow me to briefly outline the situation in Slovakia. In Slovakia, the attention is primarily focused on achieving sustainable food system that meets dietary and nutritious needs of the citizens, while simultaneously reducing the environmental impact. It is of a great significance to increase access to the supply of safe and nutritious food. Moreover, we aim to localize supply chains and support the sustainable local production and consumption. At the same time, we pay attention to food loss and waste, which we aim to reduce and minimize. Slovakia has joined countries and other stakeholders and decided to organize a National Food System Dialogue. The goal of the Dialogue is to boost nature-positive production and consumption of local and nutritious forest products. With the Dialogue, we aim to set the tone and high ambition and commit to produce more and better with less in the future.

In closing, let me commend the significant and unique position of FAO in supporting Member States in the transformation of their food systems in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the COVID-19 pandemic. FAO is well placed to lead the international efforts in bringing together and accelerating innovation, data and governance on food systems. It is clear that without common efforts to reform and transform food systems, targets of the 2030 Agenda could be missed.

Thank you very much for your attention.