

Dear excellencies, colleagues,

It is an honour for me to address you as Flemish Minister of Food as well as the Belgian national Convenor of the UN Food Systems Summit Dialogue. In this function I would like to share with you one important ambition: to achieve a resilient food system that is fit for the future.

Our food system is facing big environmental, economic and social challenges. Just think about the income of our farmers ; the lack of connection to food or the impact of diets on the environment or our health.

The COVID-19 crisis has showed us the structural challenges we need to address. But it has also demonstrated that when we collaborate for a common cause a lot is possible.

We have seen many examples of solidarity, creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation. This brings hope and confirms my belief in both the necessity, as well as the opportunity of a transformation.

The Government of Flanders, is committed to develop a strong and integrated food policy. We mobilise all actors in the food system: farmers, food industry, science, civil society, citizens and policy makers.

All together we have 4 strategic objectives:

Building a resilient food economy

The connection of producers and consumers through food

Circular and sustainable entrepreneurship for the future

Healthy and sustainable nutrition for all

To achieve these objectives, we want to write an inclusive story that contains:

Dialogue with everyone along the whole food chain

A “Go for Food” call to mobilise bottom up ideas from food change makers

Dialogue between the different policy levels.

And a research agenda for a futureproof food system

Today we already have a number of partnerships.

We delivered an action plan on food waste prevention and valorization to help the food supply chain become more circular. We have broadened our view on healthy diets to also take environmental issues into account. And we promote consumption of local high quality food products for which producers are fairly rewarded. We also have the Flemish protein strategy, in which we cover both production and consumption of all types of proteins, which in turn create opportunities for innovation.

Furthermore, several federal initiatives are making a strong contribution to making our food system more sustainable. We are working on reducing the use of anti-microbials in a ‘one

world, one health' action plan. Also initiatives like 'the Beyond Chocolate', a joint sector-wide ambition to make Belgian chocolate more sustainable, are part of that.

Today, we want to look across national borders and seek collaboration with frontrunners globally. We want to share experiences and learn from best practices in your countries to accelerate our own transition.

It's important for us that this dynamic doesn't stop at the summit. That's why we are also planning action in the years to come.

I wish you all a fruitful pre-summit, best of luck!