

MALTA
**Ministerial Statement for the Pre-Summit of the UN Food
Systems Summit**

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Secretary General,
Special Envoy to the UN Food Systems Summit
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to address you all today, and I would like to reiterate Malta's full support to the United Nations Food Systems Summit.

We feel this is an opportunity to address - in a holistic manner – the substantial transformations needed in our agri-food systems that will contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Although COVID-19 has brought the issue of food security under the spotlight, we know that there are other threats to food production, affordability and accessibility besides pandemics such as pests, viruses, zoonotic diseases, natural disasters and drought, that could adversely and severely disrupt transborder supply chains and trade markets.

It is in this context that we must work to increase preparedness, by adapting our policies, improving our response actions, and bringing about the necessary transformations so that our agri-food systems are more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

Whilst working towards these goals, we must not only be aware of the complexities and interconnections between the economic, social and environmental dimensions, but also be extremely conscious of how the different realities and diverse geographical specificities - coupled with the effects of climate change - negatively affect local production in many ways.

Given Malta's limited freshwater resources, for us, water scarcity remains an important issue and for this reason, we continue to invest in more efficient water resource management, through both on-farm small scale water harvesting and storage facilities, as well as green infrastructure projects in valleys.

Looking towards the future, one of our priorities is to encourage younger generations to enter the agricultural sector. For this, we must not only invest in new technologies and be receptive towards the concept of lifelong learning but collaborate more intensely with all the stakeholders to continue to make agriculture a more attractive and

sustainable industry for new entrants. In this regard, the key pillars are ensuring that farmers have adequate access to land and property, to fair markets, and to the necessary finance.

In this discussion, we cannot ignore another very important reality, the health of our citizens. As a country, one of the problems we need to address is the high incidence of obesity, especially in children and young teens, something that is symptomatic of an obesogenic food environment.

We recognise however, that the shift towards healthier diets will not happen without the necessary stimulus to create the right environment, built around a number of factors, such as providing more financial support to SMEs in food production and processing, and empowering citizens with the knowledge and information to make healthier food choices, starting with changes in public procurement.

Malta joins other countries in its commitment towards healthier and more sustainable food systems. Our newly set up Malta Food Agency represents the Government's vision in this domain – that of creating the right business ecosystem for the supply of food from farming and fisheries, addressing systematic weaknesses and threats around market failures, strengthening regulatory and institutional mechanisms, and driving entrepreneurial innovation in the agri-food sector.

Over the coming months, we shall also kick-start the process for the development of a national food policy that provides the framework for strategies and actions in the different areas around food security, with the deserved focus on the needs of our farmers and our consumers.

To conclude, we reiterate our recognition of the importance of the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit as an opportunity to transform and rebuild food systems and to build consensus among different sections of society. We can only aspire to work towards a common goal if we learn to appreciate the differences and agree to find common solutions of global impact that can be applied locally with success. To this effect, Malta will also join other states in selected coalitions to ensure the deliverance of sustainable pathways around the world.

This is the only way we can ensure the full commitment and participation of all those involved in the constellation of activities around our food systems.

Thank you.