

Stage 1 – Member State Food Systems Summit Dialogues

SPEECH OF

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Excellence's, President of the Republic of Italy, Secretary General of the United Nations, Director General of FAO, Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the outset, I must tell you that I am indeed happy and feel honored to address you at this important event.

As I understand, Food Systems Pre Summit is a part of the decade of action plan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Therefore, I consider this event as a turning point in achieving the set goals for 2030. Sri Lanka has shown steady growth over the last decades in achieving Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting the country's elevation to middle-income status. Despite the progress, Sri Lanka faces many socioeconomic challenges, including nutritional 'triple burden' comprising of undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. As per the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations, all member countries have set their

policies and actions to achieve the desired targets by 2030. Out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, my government is committed to achieve No poverty, Zero hunger, Climate actions in the context of agricultural policies and interventions while other remaining 14 goals are to be addressed adequately and equally in the rest of development agenda of the government.

But as an agricultural country, Sri Lanka is still capable of fulfilling 2030 agenda by eliminating all forms of malnutrition by ensuring that sufficient quantities of safe, nutritious and affordable food are available to all citizens.

Sri Lanka has almost all favorable factors required for agriculture. As a sector, agriculture continues to be significantly important to our economy, contributing to a mega share of the national output and the workforce it is a sector for Sri Lanka not only for economic point of view, but also for sociocultural reasons, and it comprises a complex system of farmers, intermediaries, consumers, and other stakeholders.

Sri Lanka's food system comprises locally produced and the balance from imported food. Majority of the domestic requirement of rice, meat, eggs, fish, vegetables, and fruits is

produced locally. However, significant portion of wheat, canned fish, pulses, milk powder, sugar, and vegetable oil are imported into the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in extreme inequities and inefficiencies in the food system which depends on thousands of food producers and processors, many of whom are living with very low incomes. The pandemic came at a time when food systems were already under strain from natural disasters such as floods and prolonged periods of drought due to climate change, and the arrival of trans-boundary pests and diseases such as Fall Armyworm at unexpected time repeatedly. Nevertheless, the pandemic, in spite of all its significant and turbulence impacts, brought about remarkable learning opportunities, demonstrating the importance of preparedness in building resilient food systems in a country.

Our agricultural sector and its supply and value chains experience many issues that threaten the food security of Sri Lanka. Transforming the Sri Lankan food system into a resilient and regenerative food system is a key to maintain the sustainability of food production and to ensure food security within the country.

Empowering smallholder farmers, practicing intercropping and agro forestry and ensuring crop and seed diversification, Restoration and management of agricultural

ecosystems, Providing market data to all stakeholders in food supply chains, Strengthening and improving loan and insurance facilities by the government and developing additional risk transfer mechanisms, Improving technology and infrastructure to minimize supply chain losses, Implementing climate change mitigation programs are some of the key strategies which Sri Lankan government is practicing at the moment.

Our government has taken another significant move to build a healthy nation by the complete banning the use of chemical fertilizer and pesticide and introduction of organic fertilizer in food production as per the Government policy frame work “Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor” launched by His Excellency the President.

As per the decision, ministry of Agriculture is taking all possible initiatives, to assure the supply of quality Organic fertilizer for the farmers. Further we look forward to overcome the challenge of producing organic fertilizer requirement of the country by utilizing locally available raw material and technology.

Through implementation of these strategies, Sri Lanka can work towards establishing a regenerative and resilient food system that is more adaptable to climate-related issues,

and other disruptions, also to protect food system and livelihoods, and ensure food and nutritional security for the country's population.

I believe this UN Food Systems Pre Summit Dialogues will be a great platform for us to share our ideas and to obtain necessary directives in developing our national pathways towards sustainable food systems in achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Finally, As the Minister of Agriculture in Sri Lanka I will assure my fullest support and the cooperation for this program.

Thank You