



The Bahamas' participation in the UN Food Systems Summit

## **Ministerial Statement**

Pre-Recorded Presentation

Good Day Chairman and Excellencies,

The Bahamas wish to commend the UN Secretary General and the UN Agencies for leading the charge towards the Global Food Systems Summit. The convening of the Summit, the involvement of global actors at all levels to adhere to its Principles of Engagement, and the targeted focus on action tracks to ensure that the levers of change can support sustainable solutions, has been an exemplary demonstration to countries of the commitment to the urgent need to transform our food systems. As a Small Island Developing State the Principles of Engagement are of critical importance and it is imperative that global commitments to support food systems in SIDS are upheld.

In recent years and in response to global trends, The Bahamas has undergone economic, demographic, technological and cultural changes that have had a profound impact not only on the food choices but also on the way in which they are produced, processed, sold, distributed, and consumed. This transformation has increased the country's dependency on food imports and has led to various extremes of challenges throughout its food system and value chains. Further to this, feedback from the country's national Dialogues suggests that the overarching gaps in the Bahamas' food system are linked to the need for facilitated intergovernmental collaboration; development of a centralized technological database to support extension services, the need to democratize knowledge across the food value chains and the shortage of private sector financial tools adapted to the sector.

In order to effectively and efficiently transform the Bahamian food system to meet the expectations of the Sustainable Development Goals

and The Agenda 2030, an innovative systems approach in the food market value chain needs to be considered, one that will implement a results-based planning and budgeting system. For this reason, the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources has developed a five-year strategic plan that aims to facilitate small business development and entrepreneurship in the agricultural and fisheries sectors. Its strategic orientation is guided by five focus areas:

- 1 **Food Import Substitution** - aim to take advantage of the national market by implementing an import substitution strategy and by linking producers to the tourism industry's supply chain
- 2 **Export Market Development** - through building the capacities of our producers to meet global standards
- 3 Support for the **Blue and Green Economy** - as a long-term, sustainable development perspective of The Bahamas.
- 4 **Improvement of Public Services** through digitization and professionalization to strengthen institutional capacities; improve

intergovernmental collaboration; and provide efficient customer service to the private sector

- 5 **Facilitation of Agricultural Finance and Investment** - to support the private agri-food sector development; focusing on enterprises that will provide innovative processes, technology transfer, and linkages with national value chains.

Leveraging on one of the key words of the Food Systems Summit, we consider innovation not only in the aspect of new technological products but additionally as new methodologies to existing approaches. Over the years, The Bahamas has developed a successful tourism industry that has increased domestic investments and attracted Foreign Direct Investments; the same can be attainable for the food industry. In the area of agriculture and marine finance, there is the need to improve conditions to promote private sector investment in the Blue and Green Economies to attract new and diverse entrants.

The Bahamas' Blue and Green Sectoral Strategy proposes to consider the growth potential of sustainable activities linked to the ocean and to the land of the archipelago, while preserving the wealth carried by these natural resources. For agriculture and fisheries, the materialization of this very great growth potential requires the adoption of clean, productive, and energy efficient technologies and innovative farming methods (such as greenhouses, aquaponics, polytunnels, aquaculture, etc.), reduced carbon footprints in food transport and food that is safe for consumption and labeled for marketing to allow consumers in The Bahamas and elsewhere to meet the requirements of sustainable development.

Understanding the urgency for a sustainable food system through investment and building capacities, in the past year, The Bahamas Government partnered with a local financial small business development center and funded 5 million US dollars through a grant program to provide farmers and fishers with grant opportunities to

develop the agribusiness private sectors. With continued support from international institutions, like IDB, the FAO, and IICA, further strengthening of rural agricultural economies can be provided.

Lastly, in 2019 the world witnessed the devastating impact of Hurricane Dorian to the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama. I wish to thank the UN Agencies and global partners for your immediate response to aid the country and its food system. It is with hope that the country will never face such a monster storm, but we have taken bold steps to increase our resiliency to the impacts of climate change. In particular is the recent decision to participate in the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to increase and accelerate innovation research and development on agriculture and food systems in support of climate action. It is undoubtedly known that through the co-creation of knowledge existing approaches can be enhanced to deliver new ways to sustainably increase agricultural productivity, improve livelihoods, conserve nature and biodiversity, and

adapt and build resilience to climate change, all while enabling science-based and data-driven decision and policy making for climate smart food systems.

The state of the Bahamian food system is known, strategies to overcome challenges have been developed, key stakeholders are engaged, and the pathway to a sustainable food system is established. Yet, we are reminded that the journey is not a sprint but a marathon and slow progress is nonetheless still progress. The Bahamas is committed to transforming its food system to become resilient and sustainable for its future generations.

Thank you.