

23 September 2021

## **Statement of the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, at the UN Food Systems Summit in New York**

I praise UN Secretary General Guterres for convening this Summit. The right initiative, on the right subject, at the right time.

It seldom happens that international summits change the world by themselves. Let's turn this Summit into one of the exceptions, with a strong call to action.

There is no simple answer to the complexity of food issues. If wrongly managed, they can seriously harm food security, our health, our planet.

Of course, this is a collective responsibility.

Latvia is committed to doing its share in trying to uphold UN commitments, including our common *Agenda 2030*. This is why I have personally led a national dialogue in view of this Summit.

Over the past decades Latvia successfully transformed its agriculture and integrated into the global food production chain. Today we are able to share our knowledge with others. Sustainable agriculture has been a longstanding priority of Latvian development cooperation.

Yet, question marks remain. I will just mention two or three of them.

What is the adequate farm structure and how to find balance between large, industrialised farms and smaller farms?

What kind of agricultural structure does our society need and want?

Do we have a shared definition of what a farmer is today? What do we think of the social and cultural dimension of agriculture, as it is related to our national identity and preserving a particular lifestyle?

What about biodiversity that shrinks year after year? How can we fight hunger and ensure an adequate level of income for our farmers and affordable products for consumers, while preserving and restoring biodiversity?

How national policies and multilateral negotiations will deal with organic products as people become more aware of environmental and health aspects?

All these issues should be discussed openly and comprehensively by the leaders. We must not shy away from identifying risks, together with opportunities.

Let this Summit become a foundation of renewed global cooperation and of a more relevant UN.

Thank you for your attention!