

Speech by Mr. Jānis Eglīts
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Ministerial Discussion
Food Systems Pathways to 2030
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN Food Systems Summit process provides an excellent stimulus for all countries to evaluate nationally the existing policies and strategies regarding **the food systems and rural areas**.

One of the key objectives of the agriculture and rural development policy is productivity increase that is balanced with the interests of preservation of nature and climate change mitigation as well as ensuring vibrant rural communities.

Investments into innovative technologies are a very important tool to reach this. **Each hectare of the agricultural land** should **add the highest possible value for economy**. Long supply chains that significantly contribute to export balance are to be combined with short supply chains for the domestic market.

Agriculture restructuring has downside on rural population as by growing farm size finding other business and employment opportunities are vital to ensure **attractive living conditions in the rural territories**.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

Today I would like to share one of the key success stories with you on **Latvia's achievements. It is farmers' cooperation**. In Latvia the farmers' cooperatives especially in grain and rape have developed over past 20 years with a limited public financial support. Over past 20 years Latvian farmers cooperatives grew

by 50 thousand euro per day. In other words from 0 to 30% of the total agriculture output that goes through cooperatives. This cooperation has transformed Latvia from net importing into net exporting country of agriculture products. It has enabled to modernise holdings, benefited farmers' resilience via investments and insurance system. Cooperatives are expanding into acquisition of their own ports as well as investing into processing facilities for protein crops that will contribute not only to growing demand of plant-based protein but also crop diversification.

An advisory and extension system is vital to bridge the science and business. 30 years ago, we established the **Latvian rural advisory and training centre**, which is co-owned by the state and farmers. It serves as a network for rural development, fisheries and innovation partnerships. It provides advice not only to farmers but also forestry sector.

This Centre provides a number of commercial services across the entire territory of Latvia - business planning and accountancy. Significant part of the service is supported by the state since many new challenges regarding sustainability and climate require prudent action by spreading the knowledge. It has served as a basis for several innovative solutions, for example, an online catalogue of short supply chain producers across Latvia.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that food system transformation requires **understanding and extensive cooperation with and within all the community groups involved in the** food system. It is challenging, but we are on the right track.

Thank you for your attention!