Global Forum for Food and Agriculture

2021 Communiqué

How to feed the world in times of pandemics and climate change?

Preamble

We, the agriculture ministers of [xx] nations, have assembled virtually on 22 January 2021 for the 13th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference on the occasion of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA). We are concerned that hunger has been on the rise worldwide since 2014, with nearly 690 million people suffering from hunger prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that an estimated 2 billion people in the world do not have regular access to adequate food. At the same time at least 3 billion people do not have access to affordable healthy diets. WFP estimates that the number of people experiencing acute food insecurity has now doubled from 130 million to 270 million people. Most importantly, over 30 million people are already facing emergency hunger levels. The magnitude of their suffering is alarming. We also note with concern that at the same time over 2 billion people are overweight or obese and that insufficient progress is being made in reducing all forms of malnutrition.

We acknowledge that this situation is caused by many challenges, such as poverty, increased inequalities, armed conflicts, economic downturns, depletion of natural resources and biodiversity loss, which often cause migration, and is being exacerbated by climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. In this year's GFFA, we are concentrating on the global challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

Despite COVID-19, global food supply and international markets have been relatively stable, and are necessary to guarantee adequate functioning of supply chains under the rules governing international trade. Nevertheless, there are fundamental shortcomings in our food systems, which are preventing us from achieving Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 2 (Zero Hunger). The socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, including unemployment, income loss and difficulties in accessing food, may have forced up to 130 million more people into chronic hunger during 2020. Furthermore, approximately 7 million additional children under 5 may have developed acute undernutrition in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has ended a two-decade streak of global progress in poverty reduction and will have pushed up to 150 million people into extreme poverty by 2021. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has warned of an impending global food emergency as one of the

consequences of the pandemic and has called for the global community to make greater efforts to improve food systems. At the same time, climate change remains a global challenge of utmost importance, especially for the most vulnerable countries - those with delicate eco-systems, high biodiversity, those affected by coastal erosion, droughts, floods and those afflicted by poverty

Against this background, we underscore the need to significantly strengthen cross-sectoral, multilateral cooperation and solidarity to minimise the impact of the current pandemic on food security and nutrition, to prevent future pandemics and to mitigate and adapt to climate change while also tackling other challenges such as biodiversity loss with the following joint actions:

Call for action

1. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

We are deeply saddened by the devastating human loss and suffering due to the health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and very concerned about its socio-economic consequences and financial costs, as countries try hard to contain the health crisis.

Recognising the essential role of the food and agricultural sector, we express our continuous and profound **gratitude to farmers and people** working along the food value chain, particularly for their efforts in continuing to work since the outbreak of the pandemic to provide agricultural and food products. We will support farmers, particularly smallholders, in sustaining their activities and livelihoods during this pandemic, respect and protect their rights, assist their recovery afterwards and help enhance their resilience.

Aiming at zero hunger

We commit to take concrete actions to fulfil the right to adequate food and safeguard global food security and nutrition. We reaffirm our commitment to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). We reaffirm the commitments made at the second international conference on nutrition to eradicate hunger and to prevent all forms of malnutrition and to implement them in the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025. We commit to take concrete actions to implement the FAO voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.

We jointly commit to address the problem of growing **hunger** and to prevent **food emergencies and famines,** providing food assistance and tackling their root causes. We will continue to support collaborative international initiatives to tackle hunger, including Nutrition for Growth (N4G), especially in those regions and populations, including women, youth and indigenous peoples, that are most affected by the pandemic, climate change and biodiversity loss. We are convinced that long-term solutions require a holistic, food-systems approach and that sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems can bring about a world free from hunger and any form of malnutrition.

We continue to rely on scientific methodologies, and support the development of improved evidence and science-based approaches to assess the sustainability of food systems, including the consideration of their externalities and hidden costs to societies, and to explore options for policy measures to improve the sustainability of food systems, including the consideration of trade-offs and synergies, taking into account national and local realities. The consideration of these assessments, e.g. at the UN Food Systems Summit, will help us to formulate policies that make food systems more sustainable.

We underscore the relevance of **social safety nets** to help poorer, vulnerable and disadvantaged populations to have access to adequate food. Healthy school meals have an important role to play in this regard for the nutrition of children and adolescents, particularly girls.

We recognise the importance of avoiding and preventing food loss and waste in aiming at zero hunger.

Keeping markets open and functioning

We will seek to minimise the risks to food security caused by measures to combat COVID-19 by keeping **trade and markets** open and **food supply chains** and distribution functioning. We agree that emergency measures in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic must be targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary, that they must not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global food supply chains, and that they must be consistent with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. We will strive to facilitate diversified food supply chains to ensure food security and nutrition in times of crisis, and support others in doing so. We will guard against any measures that could lead to excessive **food price volatility** on international markets. We particularly emphasise the vital importance of the Agriculture Market Information System (**AMIS**), a collective initiative supported by leading international organisations, as one of the tools to enhance food market transparency and policy response for food security. We stress the need to strengthen and support AMIS.

We recognise the crucial role of the WTO and the importance of internationally agreed **standards**, as well as of clear communication and strong cooperation between countries and stakeholders along the supply chain, in building agricultural and food systems that are resilient, sustainable, responsible and adaptable. We support the OIE Observatory on standards implementation.

We stress the need to ensure that national **food safety** measures are based on international standards, including Codex Alimentarius, guidelines and recommendations, and underline the need to build capacity for preventing, managing and communicating food safety emergencies in order to ensure the safety of food supplies, with specific attention to vulnerable groups.

We will work to ensure the rights, health, safety, welfare, dignity and mobility of **workers** in agriculture and throughout the food supply chain in compliance with national law and regulations and international labour standards and obligations.

We underline the importance of collecting data and of sharing experiences, **data, information, tools and methods for analysis** in order to develop a stronger understanding of the pandemic's various effects on food security, nutrition and food systems, emphasising the need for appropriate rules and safeguard mechanisms regarding the ownership and management of sensitive personal data of agriculture producers.

Rural Development

In this difficult situation, we must continue and enhance responsible investments in **rural areas and rural infrastructure**, including through public-private partnerships, while improving sustainable management of natural resources. We also recognise the importance of targeted approaches to agriculture and rural development in resource-challenged areas, and the importance of strengthening meaningful participation, in particular by women and youth, in decision-making processes regarding agri-food development. Finally, we acknowledge the crucial role of our smallholders, small family farming and farmers and the importance of improving their access to market, education and technology.

2. Preventing further pandemics

We recognise the growing risk of transboundary animal diseases and the crippling effect they can have on food security and nutrition. We also recognise the risks of zoonoses to human health, sustainable development and economies and encourage stakeholders at each stage of food systems to take actions for prevention and sustained financing.

Supporting the One Health approach

We support the **One Health approach**, which fosters integration between human, animal, plant and environmental health and other relevant sectors, and their interface at local, national, regional and global level, to manage and prevent zoonoses and to reduce risks related to pandemics and antimicrobial resistance.

In line with the One Health approach, we strongly underline the need for intensified, sustainable and long-term multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary **dialogue and solutions** across the health, agricultural, veterinary, forestry and environmental sectors. We support measures to improve and broaden the current international collaboration to build One Health capacity, in particular the FAO-OIE-WHO information systems that support e.g. early warning and transparent reporting and investigation of animal and zoonotic disease outbreaks, including those affecting wildlife. Moreover, we support recent efforts to extend the Tripartite agreement to better address all dimensions of One Health.

We will build on the **strategic framework** for reducing the risk of emerging zoonoses by using measures such as those developed by the Tripartite, UNICEF, UNSIC (United Nations System Influenza Coordination) and the World Bank in response to the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) pandemic to move towards an effective global One-Health implementation support architecture for zoonotic disease prevention, preparedness, detection, response, control and recovery.

Strengthening animal health

We recognise the pivotal role that **livestock** play in ensuring food security and nutrition and sustainable livelihoods for millions of people around the world.

We will do our part to strengthen our **domestic and wildlife veterinary services** and build robust animal health systems compliant with OIE international standards. In this regard, we will promote global solidarity and exchange of expertise when needed.

We call for the implementation of appropriate **production** methods to guarantee food safety and animal health (e.g. breeding, feed safety, good husbandry practices, hygiene, biosecurity, animal welfare and vaccination). We stress the need to support smallholders in developing countries through helping them to gain access to investment, technology and capacity building for good husbandry, hygiene and biosecurity.

With these methods, we aim to minimise the risk of the emergence and spread of **zoonoses** and other diseases, some of which may require treatment with antimicrobials. We affirm that we are committed to the prudent and responsible use of antimicrobials, while striving to reduce their inappropriate use in food-producing animals and on food crops. We stress the need for the development of national antimicrobial resistance (AMR) policy strategies by making use of internationally developed knowledge available through the Tripartite and the OECD.

We stress the need for appropriate **national and international emergency response capabilities and multi-sectoral coordination**. We acknowledge the Tripartite actions e.g. the OIE's Performance of Veterinary Services Pathway (PVS) tool, WHO joint external evaluations (JEEs) and relevant FAO activities in this field.

We support assessing the impacts of both **diseases and disease control programmes**, especially on smallholder livestock farmers, consumers, and on overall food security and nutrition.

We recognise the significance of effective **biosecurity** systems to prevent the international distribution of animal and plant pests and diseases and other invasive alien species through international trade. We therefore commit to improve the implementation of biosecurity measures based on international standards, e.g. by capacity building, along food-supply chains while taking appropriate measures, for example regionalisation, to keep markets open and functional.

Mitigating risks from wildlife

We support the ongoing OIE and FAO activities on risk mitigation in wildlife health management and trade and in emerging zoonotic and epizootic diseases that could cause epidemic or pandemic situations. We commit to take concrete actions to improve wildlife health management in line with science and based on international recommendations. We commit to comply with established international standards and end the irresponsible and high-risk use of, and illegal trade in, wildlife and wildlife products, and to tackle the drivers of nature loss and ecosystem degradation that can increase the risk of the emergence and transmission of such zoonotic diseases.

3. Climate Action

We know that **climate change** exacerbates desertification and salinization, land degradation, water shortages, the loss of genetic resources and biodiversity, the emergence and recurrence of pests and diseases and the increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. These events often lead to significant losses of wildlife and of crop and livestock yields, have negative effects on water quantity and quality, threaten the livelihoods of millions

of people and also drive depopulation-related processes in rural areas. The consequences of climate change particularly affect vulnerable communities in developing countries.

Responsibility of the food systems

We, as agriculture ministers, recognise our responsibility to take **climate action** while ensuring the provision of adequate and sustainably produced food for the world's population. In this regard, we stress the UNFCCC principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances. We stress that agriculture is particularly vulnerable to climate change and at the same time part of the climate solution. We will do our part to reform domestic policies on agriculture, to promote and steer investment towards sustainable agricultural practices that support climate-change adaptation and mitigation. Appropriate and sustainable agriculture approaches contribute to **climate change mitigation and adaptation**. For example, permanent grasslands, wetlands, good soil cultivation, soil husbandry, sustainable forest management and sustainable land management protect valuable carbon stocks, contribute to sequestering significant amounts of carbon, increase soil health, and can limit deforestation, prevent ecosystem degradation and provide eco-system services.

We will implement national policies, which could include market and regulatory measures, in order to contribute to the goals of the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement without jeopardising the right to adequate food and global food security and nutrition.

In order to enable farmers to play their role in food security while adopting sustainable **solutions** for climate change mitigation and adaptation, we emphasise that we need economically feasible, locally adapted and socially inclusive measures**.**

Enhancing sustainable production methods

We commit to improve **soil** carbon, soil health, belowground biodiversity and soil fertility. We note that further support is needed for the 4 per 1000 Initiative and the Global Soil Partnership as a means of promoting strategies to improve soil carbon content. We stress the importance of the rehabilitation of degraded land. Where appropriate, action should be taken to tackle carbon losses from high carbon value landscapes such as peatlands.

We underline the importance of avoiding inefficient **use of nutrients** and of reducing nutrient loss in agricultural soils.

We stress that it is essential to address climate change and biodiversity loss in a coherent manner. We acknowledge that the conservation and sustainable use of **biodiversity** is essential for sustainable, productive and resilient food systems, food security and nutrition.

We underline the significance of **genetic resources for food and agriculture** e.g. as a source of important traits. They are needed to adapt crops and livestock to challenges relating to climate change. We therefore stress the importance of international mechanisms and treaties on genetic resources and their implementation.

We recognise the importance of **expanding genetic and species diversity in food and agriculture as well as breeding** improved, climate-adapted crop varieties and that facilitated access to the genetic diversity of crops is essential for research and breeding. In this respect, we also emphasise the importance of local livestock breeds and local varieties managed by farmers. We recognise the rights of farmers to use, manage and preserve them, subject to

national law and as appropriate. We encourage gene banks as part of strategies for securing important seed collections.

In addition, advances in breeding research and techniques are considered to have important potential, provided they are safe for humans, animals and the environment, while bringing benefits for society.

We underscore that sustainable livestock breeding and husbandry systems can contribute to reduce GHG emissions or GHG emissions intensity, to adapt to climate change and to maintain and improve animal health and welfare.

We underline that **agroforestry** plays a significant role in enhancing rural incomes and the sustainable production of food, fodder and fibre, and as a strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to enhance biodiversity.

We will support actions to prevent further **forest losses and ecosystem degradation**, whether man-made or due to natural causes. We support joint activities on the producer and consumer sides to prevent forest loss and support the transition to sustainable supply chains for agricultural commodities to protect forests. We underline in this context the importance of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+.

We will pursue policies conducive to driving positive **behavioural change** and increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of sustainable and resilient practices and technology alternatives.

We recall the need for sustainable and integrated water resources management and support efforts to ensure sustainable irrigation, for instance by building new, and modernising existing, **water** infrastructures and irrigation systems and by innovating new water technologies. At the same time we support exploring production methods and crop types that would relieve pressure on water resources.

We recognise the important role that agriculture plays in promoting a renewable energy transition as a driver for sustainable development. Therefore, we support exploring sustainable production methods and crop types that would help reduce the use of fossil-fuel resources.

Innovation is critical for sustainable productivity growth. We therefore encourage the development and adoption of sustainable solutions, including new technologies and innovative practices, knowledge and science in agriculture in line with, inter alia, the principles and criteria of the FAO sustainability framework for sustainable bioeconomy. We emphasise the need for making innovations and new technologies available, accessible and affordable, particularly for smallholder farmers.

Enhancing management methods

We stress the importance of **risk management systems** that are adapted to regional conditions and that are affordable, in particular for smallholders and family farmers.

We underline that the success of adaptation actions in agriculture relies not only on technological innovations, but also on supportive institutional, structural, policy, trade and **investment** environments, taking into account the special needs of smallholders and family farmers. We will therefore create the conditions to encourage responsible, sustainable and

inclusive investment and research, in line with the Committee on World Food Security's Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS RAI Principles) and the OECD-FAO Guidelines for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains.

We emphasise the importance of **land tenure** and/or **access rights**. We will further support the implementation of the CFS's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (CFS VGGT).

We support further research and investment in **digitalisation in agriculture** in order to increase resource-use efficiency, facilitate well-functioning global and local supply chains and enhance sustainability, while keeping in mind the needs of small-scale producers and the important role of women and youth. In this regard, we welcome and further encourage international cooperation efforts on digital technology in agriculture (agriculture 4.0). We welcome the FAO's decision to host the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, initiated by the 2020 GFFA. We also support the development of national strategies to promote digitalisation along the food chain, including regulations on the ownership, collection, security and use of data, and to safeguard sensitive personal data of food producers.

We stress the importance of local, regional and **global networks** and of engagement in **cooperatives** and **other collective action**, so that data, innovations and other resources and experiences can be shared and applied, regardless of age, gender or geographic location.

Moving towards more sustainable food systems

We recognise that **food loss and waste** is a serious global issue, with approximately one third of food being lost or wasted. We commit to continue furthering initiatives to identify the main drivers of food loss and food waste, and to prevent and reduce such loss and waste, adopting a circular-economy approach where possible. We support an integrated, comprehensive food-systems approach in this regard.

We support the ongoing work of the Committee on World Food Security (**CFS**) on the development of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, as well as on policy recommendations on agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Monitoring changes

We emphasise the importance of improving emission factors and activity data to monitor the change of **greenhouse gas emissions** and removals from agriculture to ensure measurable progress. We also stress the need to monitor soil condition, especially carbon content.

We underline the importance of monitoring and understanding our natural resources. **Water** scarcity, poor water quality and excess water threaten agriculture and food security and nutrition. Hence we acknowledge the need to build effective early warning systems at country, regional and global level to monitor water resources and water use, especially groundwater and terrestrial water storage. We endorse earth observation methods as important

and invaluable tools for hazard monitoring, management and resilience, thereby building on the 9th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Declaration at the 2017 GFFA.

Acting multilaterally

We greatly appreciate the important work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (**IPCC**), and welcome in particular the 2019 IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land.

We, the countries party to the Paris Agreement, reiterate that the Agreement is irreversible and commit to its full implementation. We will therefore actively contribute to achieving successful outcomes at the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Strengthening the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture

We underline the importance of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (**KJWA**) (COP 23) and its outcomes. We hope that the Koronivia roadmap will be extended, and that COP 26 will reach decisions, inter alia on work on climate change adaptation, adaptation co-benefits and food security, both at farm level and throughout food systems, and improve concrete action on the ground.

We stress that any outcome from KJWA needs to be implementable by countries and directed at **enabling farmers** to take climate action.

Outlook

We acknowledge that policy makers have the main role to create enabling policy environments. At the same time, we note that it is not only policymakers who bear responsibility. Broad-based societal commitment is needed to draw closer to our goals of feeding the world in times of pandemics and climate change. We therefore call upon all food system relevant sectors and actors, international organisations, farmers' organisations, non-governmental organisations, civil society, the private sector and academia to share this responsibility and join us in our efforts. We will work together to ensure that the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit will, in particular through its civil dialogue process, raise the awareness of the food systems' vulnerabilities that have been revealed by climate change and COVID-19.

We will foster technological, organisational, social and entrepreneurial **innovations,** as well as transfer of technology, to improve productivity and sustainability in the agricultural sector, particularly by strengthening research and innovation cooperation networks and international initiatives such as the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA), the Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL), LEAP, and the International Wheat Initiative.

We recognise the importance of helping all actors along the food value chains to build a prosperous, sustainable and, where possible, circular food system that is **resilient** to climate-related developments and economic shocks for future generations. We look forward to the

G20 Italian Presidency to contribute to the debate on sustainability and resilience of the agri-food systems.

We will integrate the results of the GFFA into the current United Nations discussions on food systems and in particular into the **2021 UN Food Systems Summit**. We welcome this initiative of the Secretary-General and encourage all Member States and other stakeholders to use the opportunities to work on transition pathways to more sustainable, resilient and equitable food systems to achieve the 2030 Goals.

Moreover, this communiqué can provide important impetus for the international negotiations on climate change and agriculture.