

FAO Brussels Dialogue - Exchanges with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU

Strengthening Family Farming-centred Food Systems – Pathways for Global Transformations

14 April 2021 (Brussels)
16:00-17:30 (CET)

1. Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for “bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path” while seeking to “realize the human rights of all”¹.

Agriculture and food systems are deeply inter-twined with economies, cultures, societies, health, climate and the environment; and hence both impact and are uniquely placed to contribute to, the majority of SDGs. At the same time, **agriculture and food systems today face increasing pressure to provide sufficient, affordable and nutritious food for a growing population, while coping with climate change and the degradation of natural resources, including water scarcity, soil depletion and biodiversity loss.**

To feed the world and do it sustainably, an urgent and radical **shift in our food systems is necessary**. To be effective, transformative actions must address a complex set of interconnected objectives encompassing economic, social and environmental dimensions. **Family farmers**—including pastoralists, fishers, foresters, indigenous people and other groups of food producers—**are at the heart of this issue**. They provide the majority of the world’s food, are the major investors in agriculture and the backbone of the rural economic structure.

In view of these challenges, the United Nations proclaimed the ***United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF) 2019-2028*** interconnected with the objectives of region-specific agricultural strategies, in order to achieve substantial transformations in current food systems that will contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In order to turn climate and environmental challenges into opportunities, the **EU Green Deal** sets out how to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent fostering a new, sustainable and inclusive growth strategy to boost the economy, improve people's health and quality of life, care for nature, and leave no one behind. The **Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F)** lies at the core of the Green Deal, **addressing the challenges of sustainable food systems and recognizing the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet.**

Considering that both the F2F Strategy and the UNDFF aim for the transformation of current food systems towards healthier and more sustainable outcomes, **an alignment of these two initiatives could provide significant results and benefits for all.**

¹UN (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



Both frameworks encourage interrelations between health, ecosystems, supply chains, consumption patterns and natural resources by promoting a comprehensive approach in any actions taken simultaneously considering the economic, social (cultural and ethical) and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Accordingly, one may find valuable opportunities by identifying the synergies between the F2F Action Plan² and the UNDDFF Global Action Plan³. These could benefit from coordinated actions from the national to the global level.

The joint efforts of the F2F Strategy and the UNDDFF can make the **2021 Food Systems Summit a turning point in transforming food systems** and contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an inclusive manner.

Family Farming has been of key importance for previous and ongoing **Council presidencies**. In March 2019, the Romanian presidency hosted a conference on ‘The future of family farming’ in Bucharest. A follow-up conference planned under the Croatian presidency in March 2020 had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As at the current Presidency of the Council of the EU, **Portugal** has important examples of its active role in the family farming agenda both at national and global levels. The country coordinated efforts to implement the **Guidelines for support and promotion of Family Farming in the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP)**, in 2016, and also led the negotiations for the **Lisbon Charter for the Strengthening of Family Farming**, a commitment from the Portuguese-speaking countries that links public authorities in the development of family farming policies. Portugal has also approved its **Family Farming Statute**, which lists the principles for the promotion of national public policies in favor of family farming.

The **European Parliamentary Alliance against Hunger and Malnutrition** brings together 29 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from different nationalities, political groups and parliamentary committees. Since 2016, the Members of the Alliance have been actively contributing to consolidating the political commitment to **transform food systems** - which is one of the Alliance’s priorities; especially in the context of the Farm to Fork Strategy, and the European Green Deal as well as following the 2018 **Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition**.

Additionally, FAO explored the components of an enabling policy environment for family farming through a study on the Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks for Family Farming which examined selected policies, legislation and programmes that implicate family farming.

On the **Mediterranean perspective**, family farming plays a key role in ‘maintaining social sustainability’ and economic development. Rural associations, cooperatives, producers’ organizations youth-led-organizations and institutions, play an essential role, as agents of change to enhance to maintain the economic, social, cultural and environmental diversity of rural areas in a harmonious interconnection with urban areas through their meaningful participation in decision making processes at all levels.

2. Objectives of the Webinar

- Raise awareness about the opportunities created by the UN Decade of Family Farming in EU, neighboring countries (Mediterranean and Western Balkans) and worldwide for food systems transformation;

²https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en

³<http://www.fao.org/3/ca4672en/ca4672en.pdf>



- Exchange experiences of national strategies, programs and policies to promote sustainable food systems with family farming in the center;
- Explore concrete ways to create synergies between the implementation of the F2F Strategy and the UNDFP to transform food systems and contribute to the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Build upon positive examples on Portugal's active engagement on family farming agenda towards the achievement of sustainable food systems.

2. Expected outputs

- Increased understanding of the catalytic role of family farming for food systems transformation;
- Common understanding of the contribution of the F2F strategy and the UNDFP to the UNFSS.

3. Draft agenda – Speakers

Setting the scene

- **3' - Rodrigo de Lapuerta**, Director, Liaison Office with the European Union and the Kingdom of Belgium, FAO

Moderator

- **3'- Marcela Villarreal**, Director, Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division, FAO

Welcoming remarks

- **5' - Beth Bechdol**, Deputy Director-General, FAO
- **5' - Maria do Céu Antunes**, Minister of Agriculture, Portuguese Presidency of the Council
- **5' - Maciej Popowski**, Acting Director General, European Commission DG NEAR
- **5' - Mihail Dumitru**, Deputy Director General, European Commission DG AGRI

Insights on Family Farming in practice

- **4' - MEP Paolo de Castro**, Member of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and Member of the European Parliamentary Alliance against Hunger and Malnutrition – Policy solutions to support family farming for enhance food system transformation
- **4' - Placido Plaza**, Secretary-General, CIHEAM –The Role of Family Farming in Food Systems Transformation – Lessons learned from Mediterranean
- **4' - Leonard Mizzi**, Head of Unit for Sustainable Agri-Food systems and Fisheries, European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) – How the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy can contribute to supporting sustainable food systems for healthy diets and family farming? How can it fit into the global debate on food system transformation under the UN Food Systems Summit?
- **3' - Alfredo Campos**, Member of the International Steering Committee of the UNDFP, European Coordination Via Campesina - Creating an enabling policy



environment for the development of Family Farming: possible synergies between Farm to Fork and UNDFP implementation

- **3'- Begüm Keçici**, Farmer, Local and Solidarity – based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPA) network, URGENCI - Solutions from the ground: Building local food systems, partnerships between consumers and producers presented by a young farmer

Discussion 40'

Closing remarks

- **4'- MEP Francisco Guerreiro**, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and Member of the European Parliamentary Alliance against Hunger and Malnutrition

4. Participants

- Government representatives/policy makers
- Global and regional family farmer organizations
- Research Institutions
- FAO technical/policy experts

The event will have simultaneous interpretation in English and Portuguese.