



Meeting of the Committee for Agriculture at Ministerial Level

7-8 APRIL 2016

Summary by the Co-Chairs

(Text issued under the responsibility of co-chairs,
Minister Le Foll and Secretary Vilsack)

Ministers of Agriculture and Representatives of OECD's 34 member countries and the EU and those of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Peru, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Ukraine, and Viet Nam, along with Representatives of BIAC, FAO, IFAD, IFPRI, TUAC, UN and WTO, met in Paris for the first time in six years to explore challenges and opportunities facing the global food system around the theme “**Better Policies to Achieve a Productive, Sustainable and Resilient Global Food System**”. Minister Stéphane Le Foll of France and Secretary Tom Vilsack of United States, Co-Chairs of the meeting, led a day and a half of intensive discussions on the future of agriculture and agriculture's role in the global future, kicked off by a presentation with OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría, to invited members of the Press and public on their shared vision for the sector.

The Co-Chairs welcomed the participation of countries currently in the process of becoming members of the OECD and other invited non-member countries, recognizing the need to encourage international cooperation and to incorporate a broad range of views in discussing our shared future. The inclusion of those additional countries, the participation of the international organizations and OECD Advisory Groups (the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC)), enriched the debate and brought important new dimensions to the meeting.

We first focused on the **key challenges** facing the global agriculture and food system. The overriding challenge in global agriculture is to ensure food security for more than nine billion people by 2050 while sustainably managing the natural resources upon which our food system depends. At the same time, agriculture will need to meet the challenge of climate change adaptation and mitigation, help in improving nutrition, and foster economic opportunities that revitalize rural areas and assist smallholders facing poverty and lagging growth. The frameworks of the UN SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate change provide operational targets to meet those challenges, given a context of increasing weather-related shocks, sanitary risks, and changing markets. Productivity has long been a focus of policy makers and sustainability has received increased attention over the past few years, but resilience of the farm and food sector in the face of those risks remains insufficiently tackled in the policy agenda. **Our policies must promote the resilience, as well as the productivity and sustainability of the agriculture and food sector and rural communities; achieving those shared goals will require sustained international cooperation.**

Ministers agreed that **a transition is needed** to reach the policy environment most conducive to moving the global agriculture and food system towards the needed level of productivity, sustainability and resilience. We agreed with long-standing OECD recommendations that policies should have **transparent** objectives; that they should be **targeted** to specific outcomes and be **tailored** to achieving those outcomes with as little impact on unrelated activities as possible; that they should be **flexible** enough to be applied in diverse situations and to be adapted to changing priorities; and that they should be **consistent** with trade rules and obligations and be equitable within and across countries. In addition, greater policy coherence will be needed to build the policy environment that supports our agreed targets.

In our discussions, we identified several key policy areas to reach our agreed goals:

- Building sector-wide **resilience** stood out as a cornerstone of our global objectives. We focused on the need for policies that allow producers, markets, governments and other institutions to respond and adapt rapidly to unpredictable weather events, disease outbreaks, and market volatility. Those would include new **risk management** tools and **enhanced trade**. We will need to develop policies that encourage the development of agriculture and food systems that are inherently more robust and more resilient. While the range of risks will require different policy tools and investments directed at the farm and at different levels along the food chain, the management of those risks will need to be addressed in a systemic and holistic way. It will be important to promote solutions oriented to the economic and environmental performance of farms, and synergies at all levels of the agriculture and food system. We recognized that **innovation** in all its forms, including science and technology, education and training, and changes in farm management and structure, will be integral to developing responses that create resilience, improved productivity, environmental public goods, and opportunities for producers of all scales, social conditions, and levels of experience to improve their living standards.
- We acknowledged the importance of adopting sustainable management practices, of providing incentives to conserve limited water supplies, and supporting the transfers of knowledge needed to adjust to changing demographics in major food producing and consuming regions. Part of our response must be to develop policies that deploy effective incentives for improving ecosystem services and maintaining and improving natural resources, even as we use them more intensively, at the individual and collective levels. We must find a way to integrate environmental and sectoral policies that incentivize **sustainable use of water, land, forest, soil, and biodiversity resources**, as well as effective **climate change adaptation and mitigation**.
- We also shared the view **trade** is an essential tool for ensuring commodities and food can be effectively distributed when and where they are needed and for promoting economic opportunities for producers. We need to encourage open and transparent trade policies to support the integrated international and domestic markets that contribute to growth and development and create resilient food systems. At the same time, these policies should promote high environmental objectives, inclusive development, and responsible business conduct.
- Building resilience and productivity growth in the agriculture and food sectors will require investment in **innovation policies and systems**. Ministers acknowledged the essential role innovation in all its forms plays in contributing to environmental solutions, in particular the transition to a low-carbon economy. For example, the development of the bioeconomy and renewable, biomass-based energy and materials should be encouraged. Long-term investments must be made in basic and applied scientific **research and development** and, just as crucially, in knowledge transfer systems and technology diffusion that can help producers of all types gain access to information on and adopt appropriate technologies, practices, organization systems and solutions. Both top-down and bottom-up innovations should be promoted. In many cases public funding for those investments has been shrinking. Countries recognized the importance of additional funds for agricultural research and to leverage private sector capacities. We also agreed that to spur innovation, countries will need to adopt the necessary policies and infrastructures, including international cooperation and well-functioning markets, to support innovation systems and to develop the digital economy and open data related to agriculture and nutrition.
- We will also need domestic policies that do not shield producers from global prices, but that provide a safety net to allow adequate time to adjust to changing markets. Rural economic development policies, tailored to promote growth in specific areas, will be needed to **improve rural employment opportunities and revitalize rural areas**. In addition specific attention should be paid to generational renewal and facilitating access to farming for new and beginning farmers, including women and young people. We should also ensure that policies contribute to reducing poverty and improving working conditions and economic opportunities for farm workers, small holders, and vulnerable rural populations.

In addition to considering policies that could help to meet the challenges of a sustainable, productive and resilient agriculture, we discussed the need to promote development of **competitive and responsibly managed agriculture and food systems**. We all agreed that we must urgently explore creative and efficient policy responses to the problem of **food loss and waste** at every point along the chain from the farm to the consumer. We must also find ways to ensure that everyone has reliable access to safe, healthy, appropriate,

and nutritious foods. We must tackle threats to **animal and plant health** and their interactions with **human health and nutrition** through the potential for disease transmission and the loss or adulteration of food supplies. Ministers expressed particular concern with identifying strategies to urgently address anti-microbial resistance associated with animal agriculture and its potential dangers for human health. Finally, we must encourage the **creation of added value** along all levels of the food chain, while supporting the coexistence of diverse agriculture and food systems and promoting the development of responsible, well-functioning and competitive value chains.

We agreed that we need practical actions to foster increased **international cooperation** in several core areas. First, climate change requires increased international cooperation to develop and share solutions. We acknowledged that a key area of cooperation will be the maintenance and enhancement of soil carbon storage on as many agricultural soils as possible and the preservation of carbon-rich soils, which is promoted by the 4% (soils for food security and climate) initiative. In addition, we acknowledged other key international contributions will be achieved through climate-smart agriculture efforts such as the Global Alliance on Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA). Second, global data sharing through such activities as the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) increases international cooperation on performance of global value chains through regulatory cooperation, investment, and knowledge sharing and will increase market transparency and efficiency. Lastly, Ministers also pointed out the need for international cooperation on solutions to antimicrobial resistance and sharing experiences on water management.

Managing the transition to reach our agreed goals, through new agricultural policy approaches and through integrating policies for agricultural and food systems with the broader policy environment, poses challenges to individual countries and to the global system. To meet these challenges, we all agreed that governments need to develop **comprehensive and consistent policy packages**. In the meeting, we shared our experiences of successful and difficult policy transitions. We noted that successful transitions need to be broadly embraced and supported by our own farm and food sectors, taking into account national contexts and investing in changing ways of thinking and consensus building. **Stakeholder engagement**, specific policy measures, and collective actions are needed to succeed in managing those transitions. We agreed that policies should encompass both sector-specific and economy-wide measures for a productive, sustainable and resilient global food system. Coherent, integrated policies that promote inclusive growth and sustainable development offer the best prospect for improving standards of living and alleviating poverty in rural areas over the long run, and for enabling farmers and their families to choose the growth path which offers them the greatest economic opportunities. An integrated policy environment can support development of critical infrastructures like transportation and storage, financial services, land rights, and intellectual property rights, as well as health and education systems, all of which will contribute to the desired outcome of inclusive growth, sustainable development, and resilience of the food and agriculture sector and rural communities.

Over the course of this meeting of Ministers and senior policy-makers from countries, who together account for a huge proportion of the world's production and consumption of food and agricultural products, came to recognize that the challenges facing all of us are collectively well understood and widely shared. We discussed a wide range of practical and pragmatic approaches that might be taken to dealing with them, especially through the **work of OECD**. Participants in the meeting recognised the work already underway at OECD on some of these approaches. The new paradigm we identified for agriculture and food policies should nonetheless be reflected in depth within OECD's work. The organization should strengthen its efforts, in collaboration with other interested international organisations and partner countries, to build the evidence base for the best policy mixes that can achieve the shared policy goals agreed at this meeting while considering the local context and the conditions for a successful implementation. We especially encourage the systematic **integration of environmental and climate performance** within agriculture and food policy monitoring and recommendations and a continued focus on **the role of innovation** in all its forms in sustainable productivity growth. In addition, we recommend expanded attention to **sector-wide resilience** that encompasses farms, food chains, and rural communities within and across countries. We acknowledged the high value of the well-established agricultural policy monitoring and evaluation work, global market outlook and in-depth agriculture policy evaluations. We also encouraged OECD to continue its role of providing international comparisons and a forum for exchange of information and expertise. We would welcome a CoAg follow-up report of the Ministerial focused on those new elements. We also suggest that a meeting of Agricultural Ministers occur at a logical point when progress on our shared goals for agriculture can be assessed and adjusted consistent with the post-COP21 plans and the timeframe for meeting the SDGs.

Moving beyond the recommendations for expanded work by the OECD, the Co-Chairs have agreed to work together on several efforts we believe will have significant impacts on the future. We are committed to advancing the **COP21** agenda and the Lima-Paris Action Plan for agriculture, soil health and forestry. We will promote work on and support achievement of the **SDG goals** related to agriculture and food, in particular goal 1 “end poverty in all its forms everywhere”, including reducing poverty in rural areas, goal 2 “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, and goal 12 “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, including fighting food loss and waste and achieving the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

The mood of the meeting was positive considering the challenges facing the sector. Ministers and other participants were energized by the opportunities for agriculture to contribute to solutions, and they expressed confidence that the challenges we identified can be met. We recognize that farmers and the food system overall have been extraordinarily resilient and responsive in the past. The task for us, as Ministers and members of our governments, is to ensure that the policies and institutions are in place to enable farmers to continue to be resilient and responsive by enhancing their robustness and ability to adapt to the new risks they face. Effective international cooperation will be key to addressing those challenges and to enabling the agriculture and global food system to continue to supply sufficient, safe, nutritious food where it is needed while protecting the future of our natural resources, our rural communities, and the broader human population.