

Meeting of the Committee for Agriculture at Ministerial Level 2022 3-4 November 2022

Summary by the Co-Chairs

Text issued under the responsibility of the Co-Chairs
Minister the Hon. Ms. Marie-Claude Bibeau and
Minister the Hon. Mr. Damien O'Connor

Ministers of Agriculture and Representatives of the 38 Member countries and the European Union and those of Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kazakhstan (virtual participation), Peru, Romania, South Africa and Ukraine (virtual participation), with Representatives of the African Union represented by Senegal, and ASEAN represented by Cambodia, and Representatives of BIAC, CFS, FAO, World Bank and WTO, met in Paris for the first time in six years to explore the opportunities and challenges for the global agriculture and food system around the theme **“Building sustainable agriculture and food systems in a changing environment: Shared challenges, transformative solutions”**. Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau of Canada and Minister Damien O'Connor of New Zealand, Co-chairs of the meeting, led a day and a half of intensive discussion on the policies and research needed to build productive, sustainable and resilient agriculture and food systems. The meeting began with opening remarks from the OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann, who outlined the OECD's vision for the future of agriculture and food systems.

The Co-Chairs welcomed the participation of OECD accession candidate countries as well as other invited non-OECD Members, recognising the need to encourage international co-operation and to incorporate a broad range of views in discussing our shared future. The inclusion of those additional countries, along with the participation of the international organisations and Business at OECD (BIAC) enriched the debate and brought useful perspectives to the meeting.

Ministers focused on exchanging experiences and good practices in the face of recent shocks and threats to food systems, including COVID-19, climate change and Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.

Ministers were honoured to have the Ukrainian Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food join the meeting virtually to make an intervention to describe the realities for its agriculture sector and food system of the current crisis. The war in Ukraine is a human tragedy that has already destroyed and displaced far too many lives. In addition, global food security is being threatened by a reduction in exports from Ukraine and Russia, high energy and fertiliser prices, and volatile international food prices. The OECD's recent review of the available evidence confirms that sanctions by individual OECD Members are not impeding Russia from exporting food. On the contrary, it is the implementation of export restrictions by Russia that have added further uncertainty to global commodity markets. These current compounding challenges call for strong collaboration among countries to address the short, medium, and long-term impacts of the crisis. Consequently, we agreed to continue close dialogue to ensure that international trade in food and fertilisers remains open and transparent, enabling agricultural markets to respond to pressures, and preventing the war from further amplifying global food insecurity. We welcomed the European Union Solidarity Lanes and the Black Sea Grain Initiative brokered by the Republic of Türkiye and the United Nations as important contributions to global food security and encourage their continuation without interruption. Ministers expressed that food security should not be used as a lever for political purposes.

Prior to the Ministerial meeting, the Co-Chairs had proposed a number of priorities for Ministers to discuss. These included: underscoring actions the agricultural sector can take in the global fight against climate change, including through enhancing sustainable agricultural production and addressing food loss and waste; supporting global food security, including through an enhanced commitment to the rules-based, open and transparent trading system and supporting resilient global supply chains, noting the key role of the private sector; issues around ongoing and emerging challenges in labour markets; and promoting inclusive agriculture through increased opportunities for youth, women and Indigenous Peoples. The Co-Chairs acknowledge the informative and productive discussions that took place on these issues, and many others, and thank all Ministers and guests for their participation.

Ministers acknowledged the importance of taking a food systems approach to drive the transformation that is critical for addressing the triple challenge of (i) providing sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to a world population that is expected to approach 10 billion in 2050; (ii) addressing environmental challenges including by reducing emissions from agriculture and conserving and restoring biodiversity; and (iii) providing livelihoods along the food chain, including for more than 600 million farmers. In our discussions, Ministers identified several key policy priorities to address the triple challenge and reach our agreed goals, and charged the OECD, through its Committee for Agriculture, to support our efforts to better understand synergies and trade-offs, recognising there are different pathways to common objectives.

Ministers shared concrete solutions for agriculture and food systems transformation, creating a positive and energised mood for the meeting. Ministers and other participants expressed confidence that with innovative approaches and effective co-operation among countries, the formidable challenges facing the agriculture sector and food systems can be met. They recognised that farmers and food systems overall have been extraordinarily resilient and responsive in the past. Historically, farmers have been proud and effective stewards of the landscapes they inhabit and produce food from, contributing over time to key ecological goods and services. The task for Ministers and members of our governments, given the increasing stresses faced by farmers, is to ensure that coherent food systems policies are implemented to enable farmers and all those working in the supply chain to continue to be resilient in the face of new risks. Effective international co-operation and open rules-based trade that builds on the best science available are key to addressing those challenges and to enabling the agriculture and global food systems 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.

Over the course of the Ministerial meeting, Ministers and other participants discussed how the work of the OECD could inform decisions related to practical approaches for transforming agriculture and food systems. Participants in the meeting recognised the contribution of the OECD as a global leader in the field of evidence-based policy analysis, including to support sustainable productivity growth in agriculture. They acknowledged the high value of the well-established agricultural policy monitoring and evaluation work, the *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook* and in-depth policy evaluations. They also encouraged the OECD to continue its role of providing international comparisons and as a forum for the exchange of information and expertise.

Ministers and other participants identified areas where OECD could strengthen efforts to support effective change. To support their efforts to transform agriculture and food systems, Ministers called on the OECD to:

- Enhance dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders to identify opportunities for substantive action towards sustainable agriculture and food systems transformation.
- Take several new actions to measure the agriculture and agri-food sector's progress towards environmental sustainability. These include: 1) Developing data, common metrics and analysis to measure country progress in climate change mitigation and adaptation, including on food loss and waste; 2) Analysing the effectiveness and efficiency of agricultural policies to encourage improved environmental outcomes, including by examining environmentally harmful and beneficial subsidies; 3) Strengthening the assessment of policies and investments in innovation systems; and 4) Better monitoring and anticipation of risks for agriculture and food systems to strengthen the overall resilience of the sector.

- Measure and compare sustainable productivity growth across countries and support policy efforts to advance global food security and nutrition, including stronger analysis of the functioning of global and domestic food supply chains, including relations between food chain actors, and to identify solutions to ensure the positive contribution of trade to achieving increased sustainability and resilience.
- Improving methods for the monitoring and evaluation of policies relating to labour challenges along the whole supply chain, by developing policies to attract youth, women and new entrants to the agricultural and food sector and to strengthen the transfer of knowledge and skills to address the evolving needs of all those working in the sector.
- Advance inclusive agriculture in several ways including through: 1) Collecting evidence to highlight women's contribution to innovation in the sector and to support the development of inclusive and gender responsive policies and standards; 2) Analysis of the unique challenges of underrepresented and marginalised groups, including Indigenous Peoples; and 3) Analysis of how broader adoption of digital technologies, including improved rural internet connectivity, can transform the sector to be more sustainable and inclusive.

Additionally, it was recognised that the agricultural sector needs to do more with less, and sustainable productivity growth has to increase significantly. Average global agricultural productivity will need to increase by 28% over the next decade¹ – more than triple the increase recorded in the last decade – in order to achieve the Zero hunger target (SDG 2) while simultaneously keeping agricultural emissions on track to reach the Paris Agreement targets.

Ministers discussed the comprehensive action this will require to boost investments in innovation, infrastructure, and skills, to enable technological change and a more efficient use of inputs and natural resources.

They registered their concern that while public support to agriculture has reached record levels, almost half of support to the sector is potentially harmful to long-term efforts to combat climate change and other food systems challenges. Furthermore, despite their importance for spurring sustainable productivity growth, investments in innovation, biosecurity, infrastructure and other general services account for only 13% of transfers to the sector, compared to 16% two decades earlier. They agreed on the need to intensify efforts to reform or reorient agricultural policies and to address support measures that are harmful to the environment.

Ministers and other participants also discussed policies for the future of farming and food, including the associated labour challenges along the whole supply chain. The future of agriculture will likely see less people employed in the sector and a greater use of machinery and robotics. Vertical farming and the advent of alternative proteins could create significant disruptions reducing the labour and land requirements for food production. Farmers may increasingly need to diversify their income sources as climatic conditions change. Targeted measures should be promoted, such as adjustment policies to encourage the transition of farmers in and out of the sector, educational programs for aspiring young farmers, women, and new entrants. They also recognise the significant contributions of Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and underrepresented and marginalized groups, and agreed to work with them to address the unique challenges they face, including through investments to ensure the transformation towards just and inclusive food systems.

There was acknowledgement of the role of well-functioning markets and global value chains in providing livelihoods to hundreds of millions of farmers and workers along the food chain. New markets for carbon credits and payments for eco-systems services are also likely to emerge. Greater uptake of digital technologies will provide new opportunities to farmers, supply chain actors, and policy makers to improve the productivity, sustainability, and resilience of food systems.

¹ OECD/FAO (2022), *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2022-2031*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f1b0b29c-en>.

Ministers also agreed that, as a major source of GHG emissions, the agriculture sector has to play a significant role in terms of climate commitments and actions and committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, give positive consideration to agriculture GHG reduction targets and ensure that agricultural policy is coherent with Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement. Ministers referenced the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP27) to take place in the coming days, and opportunities for long-term emissions strategies and policies to fulfil international climate commitments. They agreed that reducing food loss and waste and improving its measurement could lead to significant improvements in environmental performance and food security, and should be made a major priority for policy attention. Promoting healthy diets and food consumption choices is also important and demand-side policies can contribute to improving both health and sustainable food systems outcomes.

Ministers and other participants acknowledged that agriculture is particularly vulnerable due to its dependence on weather and climatic conditions, and the adverse effects of climate change are already visible and increasing. Agriculture's resilience to shocks should be increased by developing concrete adaptation plans with a suite of measures that facilitate both on-farm adaptation as well as long-run sectoral transformation to avoid or mitigate damages from recurring and increasingly severe climate shocks. Agricultural risk management policies, co-designed in conjunction with stakeholders, should focus more on infrequent, catastrophic events causing significant damage to many farmers at the same time. Building the sector's capacity to absorb, adapt and ultimately seize opportunities and transform in response to a wide range of risk scenarios (weather, markets, diseases, etc.) is key.

Ministers recognised the importance of enhancing collective action at all levels. They acknowledged the opportunity to strengthen international cooperation, including with developing countries, for example through sharing knowledge, research, best practices and experiences. They also committed to working together with farmers and agribusinesses more generally on the development of agricultural practices that conserve and restore biodiversity, tackle negative effects of land conversion to agriculture on biodiversity, increase water use efficiency and reduce water quality degradation, enhance ecosystem services and improve soil health and air quality, including through better nutrient management, integrated pest management, agroforestry, approaches to encourage circular economies, and agro-ecological approaches and other innovative context specific approaches. They look forward to a successful and ambitious outcome at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) in Montréal.

Ministers also agreed that we need practical actions to foster increased international co-operation in several core areas. First, climate change responses for the sector require increased international collaboration so research breakthroughs are realised and implemented more rapidly, and enhanced investment in research, innovation and extension services for agricultural GHG mitigation solutions. Second, they agreed to invest in food market transparency by strengthening our support to the Agricultural Market Information Systems (AMIS). They also acknowledged the international organisations quadripartite efforts to focus on One Health solutions to combat Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), emerging zoonotic diseases with pandemic potential, and other threats to global health security.

Ministers concluded the meeting by adopting a Declaration that reflects commitments and calls on the OECD to advance work on all of the topics mentioned above, including the priorities of the Co-Chairs. They suggested that the next meeting of Committee for Agriculture at Ministerial Level should take place in the first quarter of 2029, a year out from the timeline for meeting the 2030 SDG goals.