



Media statement 9th Forum for the Future of Agriculture

Brussels, March 22, 2016

Not business as usual – UN SDGs and Forum demand action and collaboration

The Forum for the Future of Agriculture took place today, during which Brussels suffered a number of terrorist attacks. Our thoughts are with all those involved and please join us in expressing our deepest sympathies to those who have lost loved ones.

The 9th Annual Forum for the Future of Agriculture (FFA) called on the agri-food industry, governments and NGOs to innovate and collaborate like never before in order to meet the food and environment security challenges laid down by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In a meeting which opened with a video address by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and featured a range of global and European leaders, the dominant themes of the conference revolved around reforming and transforming the agriculture model; changing societal behaviours, including responsible consumption; and disrupting and rethinking the innovation model to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

To meet these goals, participants agreed that a collective effort which transforms our economic and social models would be needed. While the SDGs present a clear series of challenges that must be met, the translation of these into policies and practices represents a multi-year process. These goals should be seen as a new global deal that is not fixed in place, but rather a flexible set of policies that can be adjusted according to what works in practice in order to achieve the end goal.

It was clear that many of the 1,500 delegates also believed that profound and lasting changes would be needed to deliver on the SDGs, and that they would remain aspirational unless governments, academia, business and NGOs learned how to better collaborate.

In his opening speech to the meeting, FFA Chairman, **Janez Potočnik** said:

“The Sustainable Development Goals represent a new global contract where we recognize the planet as our partner and benefactor. To achieve them will require an extraordinary effort

of every society and economic actor; they represent nothing less than a change in the way we live and organize ourselves. Delivering on the SDGs is about delivering both food and environmental security at the same time. To do this, we must maximize our nutrient efficiency and move towards a circular economy that prevents waste and pollution throughout the food chain and in our societies."

UN Secretary General **Ban Ki-moon** commented in his video address:

"True progress demands new food systems that focus on health, protect the environment, promote social justice, empower women and advance development in communities. These food systems should give opportunities to young people and support smallholder farmers."

Achim Steiner, Under Secretary General, United Nations and Executive Director, UNEP echoed Mr. Ban's comments, saying:

"Rethinking agriculture is key in a world of 9 billion consumers, with climate change and resource constraints becoming more present. Agriculture needs to be an integral part of the solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which requires a systems approach."

In his speech on the transformation of the agriculture model **José Graziano da Silva**, Director General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO, said:

"It is important to highlight that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs present a comprehensive and transformative vision of development that reflects the deepest aspirations of humanity for a world that is fair, safer, more inclusive and more peaceful."

In the same session, **Phil Hogan**, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, argued:

"Today I wish to make the case that the European Union is stepping up to the plate, both at home and abroad, when it comes to taking a leadership role in sustainable development. Sustainable development goals are integrated into the Common Agricultural Policy, into our agricultural research and innovation policy, and into our agri-food trade policy. European agricultural policy is assuming leadership in implementing the relevant SDGs. This leadership will evolve and deepen in the coming years, working on its own steam and in tandem with other EU and international policies."

In a thought provoking keynote address Professor **Jeffrey Sachs**, Director of The Earth Institute, Columbia University, said:

"The Forum for the Future of Agriculture is a unique and timely gathering of world leaders in agriculture and sustainable development to discuss the crucial issue of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Agriculture stands at the heart of the challenge of sustainable development. Yet the challenges are daunting. We must feed a growing world population with a nutritious diet; raise the living standards of smallholder farmers; make the food supply resilient to climate shocks; and lower the impact of the farm sector on land, water, and climate. This is a profound challenge that will require the best of science, policy, business, and civil society operating together in a bold and cooperative manner."

As part of the final session on disrupting and rethinking the innovation model to achieve the SDGs, **John Ingram**, Food Systems Programme Leader at the Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford said:

"Food systems encompass interactions among a number of activities conducted by many actors who are all influenced by a wide range of environmental, social, political, economic and technological factors. An agricultural innovation system perspective recognises these

interactions and, when combined with a food systems approach, can identify interventions which synergistically address multiple SDGs.”

Thierry de l’Escaille, Secretary-General of the European Landowners’ Organization and co-founder of the FFA, said:

“The implementation of the SDGs means we must adapt our agricultural and environmental policies. Their implementation must be coherent so that they are compatible with today’s and tomorrow’s farm businesses. Countryside entrepreneurs rely on dependable and sensible regulations that protect what is best about rural Europe while promoting a maximum of practical and scientific innovation. Only by combining the best of our traditions with our most forward thinking will we achieve global food and environmental security”.

Jon Parr, Chief Operating Officer, Syngenta and co-founder of the FFA, said:

“Nobody has all the answers to the global challenges we face. If the UN Sustainable Development Goals are to be truly implemented – and not to remain a set of aspirations – then business as usual is not going to cut it. This is as true for Syngenta and the agri-food industry as it is for governments and NGOs. It means that all of us must leave behind the old prejudices and ways of working and to innovate – not just with technology but with farming practices and knowledge sharing – and to collaborate like never before to achieve our goals”.

Notes to editors

The Forum’s 9th edition was chaired by former European Environment Commissioner Chair of the RISE Foundation **Janez Potočnik**. It featured a range of high-level speakers including **Ban Ki-moon**, Secretary General, United Nations (video message), **Achim Steiner**, Under Secretary General, United Nations and Executive Director, UNEP, **José Graziano da Silva**, Director General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO, **Phil Hogan**, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission, **William Rolleston**, Vice President, World Farmers’ Organisation, **Jon Parr**, Chief Operating Officer, Syngenta, **Jeffrey Sachs**, Director of The Earth Institute, Columbia University, and **John Ingram**, Food Systems Programme Leader, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford.

Over 1,500 participants attended the Forum, which remains open to all stakeholders and free to attend, making it a unique feature of Europe’s agriculture and environment conference calendar.

About the FFA

The annual Forum is an initiative of the European Landowners’ Organization (ELO) and Syngenta. It brings together a diverse range of stakeholders to catalyse thinking on the way European agriculture needs to respond to the major challenges that it faces in delivering food and environmental security. The Forum was created in 2008 in response to a belief that many EU policies impacting agriculture are focused on solving yesterday’s problems, such as overproduction, and do not deal with new challenges and market opportunities. Challenges include feeding a growing world population, demand for a higher quality diet, increased demand for renewable sources of energy and changing weather patterns. With limited arable land available, there is a need to sustainably maximize production from that already under cultivation.

www.forumforagriculture.com

About the ELO

The European Landowners' Organization (ELO), created in 1972, is a unique federation of national associations from the 28 EU Member States and beyond which represents the interests of landowners, land managers and rural entrepreneurs at the European political level. Independent and non-profit, the ELO is the only organization able to stand for all rural entrepreneurs. The ELO promotes a prosperous countryside through private property dynamism. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.

www.elo.org

About Syngenta

Syngenta is a leading agriculture company helping to improve global food security by enabling millions of farmers to make better use of available resources. Through world class science and innovative crop solutions, our 28,000 people in over 90 countries are working to transform how crops are grown. We are committed to rescuing land from degradation, enhancing biodiversity and revitalizing rural communities.

www.syngenta.com or www.goodgrowthplan.com

About the RISE Foundation

The Rural Investment Support for Europe (RISE) Foundation is an independent foundation which strives to support a sustainable and internationally competitive rural economy across Europe, looking for ways to preserve the European countryside, its environment and biodiversity, and its cultural heritage and traditions. Chaired by Janez Potočnik, it deals with policy analysis and project financing.

www.risefoundation.eu

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