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9th Forum for the Future of Agriculture

“Sustainable Development Goals: Transforming the agricultural model”

Speech by European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development –Phil Hogan

- Many thanks Jose for your insightful intervention.
- I would also like to thank Achim for his excellent keynote address earlier this morning. And finally, thanks to former EU Environment Commissioner Potočník and UN Secretary General **Ban Ki-moon**, for their valuable contributions.
- Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very happy to be here with you today. This is an opportune moment to take stock of where we stand.
- **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.**
- Agenda 2030 is universal. This means that our commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs) apply to both our external and internal policies. And I also want to make it clear that sustainable agriculture is central to this leadership.
- **Today I want to confirm the integration of sustainable development goals into the Common Agricultural Policy, into our agricultural research and innovation policy, and into our agri-food trade policy.**
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement have given us a clear roadmap for sustainable development in the years to come. However, without meaningful implementation on the ground, these goals will remain aspirational in nature.
- To achieve real progress, there needs to be a prominent role for sustainable agriculture policy.
- Indeed, we are witnessing an increasing focus on agriculture policy in all international fora addressing global sustainability.

- Among the Sustainable Development Goals there are particular priority areas for agriculture – notably the zero hunger target by 2030 in SDG 2. In SDG 12, there is an emphasis on the sustainable use of resources and climate action through responsible consumption and production.
- Climate action is the priority of SDG 13, while "life on land" - in other words how we **manage forests, tackle land degradation, and stop biodiversity loss** - is the focus of SDG 15.
- We are all familiar with the challenges underpinning these goals:
- As global population growth continues to accelerate, the world needs to produce more and better food. In the 21st Century, with our knowledge, our wealth and our technology, no-one should have to experience systematic hunger.
- But that same population growth will put even greater pressure on our environment and resources. So the way we think about food, and the way we produce food, has to adapt accordingly.
- We know the world possesses enough available land, water, and people to make this happen. We already have much of the technology and know-how to tackle both hunger and climate change. We already produce enough to feed the world, but we waste or lose upwards of 30% of our production.
- So the challenge is a political one: can we organise ourselves to make zero hunger a reality? It is a very substantial challenge and responsibility: resting in part on the shoulders of everyone in this room.
- As EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, I am responsible for the Common Agricultural Policy – still today the only EU policy fully funded and administered from Brussels.
- **The CAP has changed to reflect a changing world, and I firmly believe it has evolved for the better.**

- **I'd like to present you with an overview of what the CAP is currently doing to help Europe meet its SDG commitments.**
- **And I'd also like to show you where we can aim to be even more ambitious.**
- It is true that in the past, the CAP did not have a strong emphasis on sustainable development.
- However, **the reformed CAP has a positive story to tell, both at home and in the developing world.**
- The objectives of the CAP are fixed by the EU Treaties and have not changed since 1958. The policy, however, has changed tremendously. Traditionally, the CAP was a very inward-looking and protectionist policy.
- Today, the CAP continues to guarantee a decent livelihood for our farmers and agri-businesses, and can be summarised in three key aims:
 - Viable food production contributing to food security;
 - The sustainable use of resources;
 - And balanced territorial development of our rural areas.
- **But the policy has also become far more outward-looking and is truly plugged into the global economy.**
- This means that European farmers and agri-businesses are competing in international markets to sell our products. And it means a more global outlook and a more nuanced understanding of the policy's impact on other parts of the world.
- In line with the aims of SDG 2, the CAP contributes to Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in global markets, due to its increased market orientation;
- It also prioritises sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices to improve the ecological performance of EU agriculture;

- This is beneficial for Europe's contribution to other SDGs, be it in terms of enhancing the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources (as in SDG 12), or combating climate change and its impacts (as in SDGs 13 and 15).
- And thanks to its rural development policy, the CAP can be considered as a role model for keeping lives and livelihoods in rural areas. We aim to support sustainable rural communities by providing them with the economic opportunities and social and cultural cohesion they need.
- The CAP is now more aligned with other EU policies, in particular agricultural trade and research. This means a continuing focus on healthy and quality products without hampering Europe's very open access for agricultural products from developing countries. We also provide a wealth of opportunities for third countries to adopt out best practice and benefit from knowledge spill-over.
- Let's look at the climate and environmental dimension. While moving towards a stronger market orientation, we have reoriented the CAP to improve the **environmental performance of EU agriculture** and to contribute to the provision of public goods not remunerated by the markets.
- In the 2014-2020 period, 30% of CAP funding supporting farmers' incomes is spent on environmental and resource friendly production methods ("greening").
- And nearly half of the EU-budget for rural development programmes is spent on a series of measures benefitting the environment or the fight against climate change.
- In addition, the European Union is a committed leader in the area of climate action.
- This was clearly demonstrated at the COP21 Climate Change Conference. Implementing the Paris Agreement on the ground will be difficult, but it is a commitment that the EU embraces.
- And we have already come a long way. Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture have dropped by 24% since 1990.

- Agriculture and forestry must continue delivering on the EU's ambitious pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions even further.
- And I'm happy to remind you that the farming sector is already contributing a growing share of the EU's total output of renewable energy, with almost 10 % provided in 2012. In the same year, forestry contributed with 47%. This is very promising for the road ahead.
- We will also continue to work closely with our developing country partners to assist them wherever possible in meeting their own SDG targets. We have strong links at multiple levels, including in international fora.
- Sharing expertise and addressing problems together is the smartest way of achieving these ambitions. But we mustn't take our eye off the bottom line, either. These challenges will only be solved with significant investment, from both public and private sources.
- The reality is that in today's squeezed global economy, aid budgets are under pressure. Needs far outweigh capacity. Development aid and emergency assistance are still at the forefront of our efforts. **And the private sector has the resources to transform the agricultural economy of developing countries.**
- Under SDG2, there is an onus on all parties to "make markets work". This means galvanising responsible private investment in developing countries, promoting smart, sustainable and profitable farming practices.
- I'm proud to say that the EU is already making real progress on this front.
- Just before World Food Day last year, we launched a process to reach out to EU agri-businesses and persuade them to invest in African agricultural growth.
- The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which provides a blueprint for implementing the SDGs, makes it clear that developing countries have the primary responsibility for their own development.

- In the coming years, we will continue to persuade EU agribusinesses to enter partnerships with African and developing country farmers' organisations to provide responsible investments.
- Ladies, and gentlemen, the CAP is now attuned to its political responsibilities when it comes to sustainable development. 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 conclusion, the European Commission's commitment is this: **we must continue on this path and we will do so.** We will honour our commitments, and add to them where possible.
- We are ready to lead from the front.
- Thank you for your attention.