

## Presentation of hemispheric messages during Food Systems Pre-Summit

On 27 July 2021, the unified messages of the countries of the Americas regarding the transformation of agri-food systems on the occasion of the Food Systems Summit convened by the United Nations (UN) were formally presented.

The presentation was made in the framework of the Food Systems Pre-Summit held in Rome from 26-28 July 2021. Authorities of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture and 24 countries, including the ministers of 18 States, participated in the event both virtually and in-person from the Brazilian Embassy in Italy and IICA headquarters. Manuel Otero, Director General of IICA, gave the opening and closing remarks (from Rome). **This document summarizes the main messages, as well as key words from the authorities' remarks.**

## COMMON THEMES ACROSS THE MINISTERS' AND OTHER AUTHORITIES' REMARKS

- They highly regarded the unified position of the Americas, which is the result of a joint work and consensus facilitated by the Institute.
- They all referred to and supported the three basic principles and 16 messages.
- They emphasized the need for the voice of the Americas to be incorporated into the Summit, not just to be heard, but also integrated into the discussion. The Region must be a protagonist.
- There was a strong consensus regarding the current and future contribution of the agriculture of the Americas to food security and ecosystem services.
- They repeatedly expressed the concept that “agriculture is part of the solution”, as well as the need to advance toward more sustainable and resilient systems.
- On several occasions, they mentioned that climate change, international trade and research and development are priority topics for transforming the food agri-systems.
- They underscored the need to recognize and consider the diverse realities and conditions (sociocultural, economic and agroecological) in the hemisphere and in relation to other regions.
- They anticipated future joint work as a continuation of the work already done and, especially, new activities and policies to undertake the actions indicated in the messages.

**FIGURE 1. WORD CLOUDS DERIVED FROM THE MINISTERS' REMARKS** (TERMS REPEATED FIVE OR MORE TIMES)



## NOTES FROM THE MINISTERS' AND OTHER AUTHORITIES' REMARKS

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### Manuel Otero (IICA)

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The Institute is building bridges between countries, subregions and themes. The 16 messages that express unity and the desire to achieve a consolidated position were inspired by the work of the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS) and the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) and reflect a spirit of unity. Our intention is to be protagonists and not only witnesses to the things that are going to happen. The ministers give the orders and define IICA's agenda in support of the countries and regions.

The messages express three basic principles:

1. Farmers are the core of any transformation to be undertaken.
2. Science must be the basis for all decisions.
3. Agriculture is part of the solution and a strategic sector for achieving it.

### Santiago Bertoni (Paraguay)

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We are a very important food producing region. The messages result from a shared effort that began late last year, and that involved dialogues at the CAS and CAC level and, more recently, the agreement of a vision during the IICA Executive Committee annual meeting. The messages reflect the Region's expectation regarding the responsibility assumed in terms of agricultural production and sustainability.

### Tereza Cristina Correa da Costa Dias (Brazil)

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This is a hemispheric position that unites the countries and expresses common principles to be organized and applied on the road to the Summit.

In Latin America, the history, culture and livelihoods are closely related to the environment. Our societies grew based on their link to the earth, animal breeding and nature, among other aspects.

The Region is an example of sustainable production. Our Region provides the most food and environmental services to the rest of the world. It is imperative that our message be heard and incorporated into the Pre-Summit discussion. How can we discuss agriculture without taking into account producers, such as ranchers? How must we address the subject of environmental protection and biodiversity? That is why the 16 messages were formulated with the technical support of IICA.

We are very different countries, but we are together. Our heterogeneity exposes the need to recognize the diversity of production systems and how to make them more sustainable. There isn't just one way. We must walk together with the cultural realities of each one.

We defined clear, common structural principles: international trade plays a leading role not only in food security, but also in generating jobs and income. Moreover, it ensures a supply for the smaller, more vulnerable countries, such as the island states who face difficulties in accessing the chains.

Science and innovation are key tools for sustainable production. We must create mechanisms to strengthen research and capabilities in order to democratize sustainability. Agriculture must be taken into account in the context of its vulnerability to climate change. It cannot be said that climate change is the result of agriculture; greenhouse gas emissions do not come from only farming. In that sense, renewable energies are essential.

The perspectives of the States must not be ignored. Each must implement public policies and government adhesion is key for changes to occur. After the meeting in Rome, we will evaluate prep work for the Summit in September and consider alternative political solutions.

The voice of the Americas, diverse and powerful, must be incorporated into the Summit's discussion.

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## Zulfikar Mustapha (Guyana)

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I congratulate IICA for organizing this forum. The perspective of the Americas regarding the agri-food systems is fundamental. In that respect, several countries and regions were able to band together and reach a joint position.

The Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) worked on a strategy to move forward with its agenda on agri-food systems, which recognizes that the Region continues to face challenges in developing competitive systems aimed at achieving food security and its economic objectives. These challenges include the costs of trade; vulnerability to climate change; economic shocks; a lack of infrastructure, financing mechanisms and extension services; limitations

in terms of technological applications and research and development (R+D); and interregional barriers to trade. We are strongly committed to the transformation, a process in which the members of CARICOM must take part in order to establish a robust system.

Our Region is very vulnerable to climate change; it is the second most vulnerable region in the world: we are experiencing hurricanes, unprecedented floods and volcanic eruptions like the recent eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

We must take measures to reposition the agriculture of the Caribbean, including strengthening the ties between the tourism and agri-food sectors, implementing smart technologies related to the climate and transitioning to digital agriculture.

CARICOM's strategy includes an advanced implementation of commerce; investments in specialized production, digital agriculture, loan and insurance mechanisms, R+D and technology use; and improving infrastructure to support the markets and road networks. Work groups are focusing on removing technical obstacles to trade and implementing investment, production and R+D strategies, in addition to measures to reduce risks and improve transportation and logistics.

Today, financing earmarked for mitigating the effects of climate change is more decisive than ever. International support, including the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IICA, other financial institutions and bilateral partners, is critical for increasing the resilience of the agricultural sector. In terms of the vulnerability fund, the Region is eager for the implementation of the solutions posed by the Summit and remains committed to fulfilling the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

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## **Luis Basterra (Argentina)**

I would like to thank IICA for coordinating the relationship between the countries of the Americas. The result of the joint effort is very good, but the process was even more important: it allowed us to reach an agreement and find identities that reflect the nations' interests.

The Americas do not make decisions for others; rather, it contributes to solving serious problems, including climate change and food production for an increasingly demanding humanity. Our people come first, followed by our environment, which enables us to supply large amounts of food.

We must unify our position with respect to our natural capital and value in providing ecosystem services; this must be given greater weight at the debate. How we produce—with respect for the environment—is how we can solve the problem; it isn't the problem in itself. We are very attentive to caring for our natural resources and how we can utilize them to provide food and services.

This is the path; the Summit has given us the opportunity to come to an agreement. Let's adhere to the model of cooperation of animal health and food safety scientists, of the analysis of trade restrictions that are imposed on those of us who are efficient. We will accept changes based on science; but any other decision must not go against the interests of the Americas.

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### Tanlly Vera (Ecuador)

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This space of unity is very important. The Pre-Summit sets a historic precedent for a powerful, coordinated effort. Additionally, it is an opportunity to support the fight to raise awareness of the work of rural women.

If the goal is to eradicate hunger and chronic childhood malnutrition, reactivate the economy and production and create jobs without neglecting the ecosystems, we must use all the tools available. In that respect, there is strong commitment and determination and so the time has come to execute concrete actions based on the reality of each space and country.

I thank the Institute for its cooperation and collaboration. Together as a Region we demonstrated that we can achieve anything in unity and with team work. Our farmlands need commitment, work, technification and restructuring to meet the world's demand for healthy, safe foods. In the face of COVID-19, the agricultural sector did not surrender and will help us to achieve economic recovery.

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### María Emilia Undurraga (Chile)

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I thank IICA for its joint work and leadership aimed at achieving this common vision that includes not only the ministers, but also scientists and other actors, and for encouraging us to work in unity to find common solutions.

Agriculture is not the problem; quite the opposite, it is part of the solution. In this context, it is worth mentioning the focus on sustainability, which encompasses the economic, social and environmental pillars and puts people at the center, starting with production and ending with consumption. This is focused on food security and includes the rural development strategy, studying the culture and diversity of landscapes and traditions.

The rural world and food production is part of our pride and identity; because of this, as a Region we must contribute not only food, but also a number of other activities. This challenge must unite producers and consumers, instead of pitting them against each other. In this context, international trade is very important.

We must be willing to work together not only to prepare for the Summit, but also to face the many challenges in different areas. When our objectives and contributions are coordinated, from each of our territories we can work for the well-being of the Region and the world as a whole.

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### **Jason Hafemeister (United States)**

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I am thankful for this space for coordination and collaboration in favor of the hemisphere.

Right now, we are facing three serious challenges: how to feed a growing population; how to produce food sustainably despite climate change; and, most importantly today, how to develop innovative technology to produce more using less.

We must recognize the critical importance of open markets and trade to promote the dissemination and adoption of new technologies.

This group (the one that defined the messages) fulfills a powerful, unique purpose in presenting new ideas. We are eager to ensure a close collaboration.

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### **José Ángel López (Guatemala)**

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On behalf of CAC, I reaffirm my support and personally adopt the 16 messages that were framed in CAS in collaboration with the Institute. This is an accurate expression of what we can do in the future, and not only in preparation for the Summit. In coordination with IICA, we must dignify agriculture and food production, as it is a key sector that must be allowed to continue.

Regardless of their scale, all farmers contribute to a healthier, better-fed world. We must expand our vision and take advantage of this opportunity to give dimension to agriculture based on its true nature. There are many challenges in terms of innovation, family farming, food safety and climate change. We must work not only to mitigate the effects of climate change, but also to conserve our soils.

I wish to express my appreciation of the Institute for the foundation it has laid.

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### **Mauricio Guevara (Honduras)**

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I appreciate IICA's unconditional support of Honduras during the COVID-19 crisis and after the passage of the hurricanes.

Our countries have some aspects in common in terms of technology, innovation, productivity and how to take food from farm to table. It is important to provide

soft financing to small-scale farmers; i.e., custom loan products. Great effort has been made to help farmers, who are currently facing a number of difficulties.

We mustn't neglect the water factories, watersheds and micro-basins that nourish farming activities (both traditional and smart irrigation systems). We must raise awareness about caring for these resources and about reforestation and support farmers through private banking and soft loans.

The reality of agriculture in the Americas is quite different to that of Europe and Asia, even though we have food security as the connector. Our agriculture is mainly subsistence farming.

Competing with the subsidized farming of other countries complicates things. We must come to an agreement to strengthen our countries' small-scale farmers.

The Institute has maintained its leadership in the Americas to carry out joint work. Now we are more united than ever: we have CAC, CAS, the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), and our vision and roadmap are clearer than ever.

We must take an innovative approach by employing sustainable alternative crops to generate wealth, jobs, etc. In that sense, we face enormous challenges.

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## **Augusto Valderrama (Panama)**

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The world is getting smaller and smaller. Here in Panama, we are facing the same problems as those posed by our colleagues.

I am thankful to IICA for its support of Panama during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted economic and production systems around the world.

As a consequence of the pandemic, a number of inequalities have come to light and the production sector is heavily affected. Our production systems demand greater equality. The post-pandemic situation necessitates that our governments and international organizations make drastic decisions to achieve more equitable and egalitarian development levels.

Our economic, social and production systems demand greater equality around the world. Today, the wealthier countries are compelled to organize and to help smaller nations.

We are victims of the damages caused by climate change. We must come to an agreement to devise a new way to survive by establishing sustainable farming systems in which men, women and the rest of the family are the center of development.

Today more than ever, we must unite to find solutions and eradicate the inequality motivated by the pandemic: in some countries, 70% of the population is already



vaccinated, while in others the percentage is negligible. In several of these, the food sector has been devastated by unequal trade conditions and migration to the cities and other nations is on the rise.

Now is the time for unity, solidarity and action. We must support education, food, unity and the people.

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### **Clarence Rambharat (Trinidad and Tobago)**

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The world needs greater production of safe, healthy foods. The fight against an unhealthy diet assumes a high level of importance as it entails a significant part of our budget. In this context, the key messages on which we have all agreed are important. I congratulate the Institute for the vision it will present at the Summit.

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### **Lourdes Cruz (Mexico)**

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I express my support of the initiatives originating in the Executive Committee to transform the food systems. We are driving a regional initiative to benefit the sector, producers and the well-being of our farms. We have worked hard to bring this proposal on the transformation of food systems to the FAO.

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### **Fernando Mattos (Uruguay)**

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Food systems are under the microscope and this initiative of the UN is very opportune.

The continent's agri-food systems are very important to the food supply, health and economic activity. Our Region has the greatest potential for growth in terms of food supply and the eradication of hunger around the world. The population will continue to grow and production areas will continue to shrink.

IICA and other international organizations play a key role in applying technologies and the conservation of our natural resources, which while bountiful, are often threatened.

The American continent is increasingly important in terms of food supply. We must bind ourselves to science and research and reject the theories that link the continent's agricultural production to climate change. We are the solution and not the problem for the food systems. Based on our own generation of knowledge and science, we must reject any theories that blame us for the effects of climate

change. It cannot be allowed for limitations to be proposed on the consumption of our products, while other sectors that are largely responsible for those effects do not do anything to prevent them.

We support the messages that were formulated. With the collaboration of the Institute, our hemisphere showed its capacity for coordination and joint work. In this sense, we are going to raise our voice in support of the development of food systems and the liberalization of trade, as excessive control causes serious harm.

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### **Floyd Green (Jamaica)**

As members of the Region, together we are stronger. That is why it is important to present our regional perspective. We must decrease our food imports and increase our food security. This is the perfect time to undertake these actions. We already know what we have to do: use the Summit to mobilize our international partners to ensure action. If we do not act, we will not achieve our objectives.

It is essential that we act on climate change as it relates to agriculture. We are the second most disaster-prone Region.

Especially in the island States, the technology necessary to transform the agri-food systems is out of our reach. Alongside large companies, we must mobilize resources to ensure that small-scale farmers have access to the technologies they need to be more efficient, productive and resilient.

It is important that IICA encourage youth involvement in the transformation process; our young people must lead this transformation.

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### **Indar Weir (Barbados)**

I congratulate the Institute for taking the initiative to discuss food security and agriculture in the hemisphere.

In this context, we are facing an increasing number of challenges and complexities, which we must tackle in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 2. We must deal with a number of problems, including climate change, to which the Region is extremely vulnerable. We need mechanisms that help farmers to recover after extreme climate events. We must address these issues to eradicate hunger and improve food security.

Moreover, we must overcome the obstacles to trade, make the right decisions and determine what the Region must do if it were to decide to tackle the issue collectively, working to ensure food security becomes a reality.

We cannot ignore the fact that transport is still a major problem, due not only to the increase in costs, but also the lack of accessibility. SDG 2 will never be achieved if this problem is not resolved.

I hope the conversations to come will focus on food security.

## Orlando Achu (Bolivia)

On behalf of Bolivia, I applaud the convening of this meeting in parallel with the Pre-Summit. It is important to address the vision of agriculture, since our institutions are responsible for generating the resources and conditions necessary for food production. The messages we have agreed on are very important. At the State level, we must generate public policies that prioritize small-scale farmers, who predominate in the country.

The change taking place in consumption is very important: it is the responsibility of producers to adapt to consumer demands.

As regards the environment, we must devise strategies to ensure the sustainability of the natural resources used for production to guarantee healthy, safe foods for the population.

It is important for all the ministers to share the strategies, experiences and lessons learned in order to face the challenge implied in food production.

The governments are in charge of undertaking the actions proposed in the messages and Bolivia is committed to doing just that.

## Manuel Otero (IICA):

The future is intimately tied to the agriculture of the Americas, which is called to be the guarantor of food security and the sustainability of our planet. At the next IABA meeting, we will begin to devise concrete actions to achieve this. If we are directed to establish coalitions, the Institute is up to the task, always following the directions given by the ministers of agriculture.