

The Young Farmers G20 Summit

Dear

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation,

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and

Minister of Youth Policies

The undersigned 11 organizations represent young farmers in 19 countries and the European Union that comprises the Group of Twenty (“G20”).

As young farmer organizations, we want to take the opportunity of the G20 to share with you – who represent our National Governments in such high-level forum – our needs, concerns and potential suggestions to improve the livelihood of rural communities. We need to act in order to ensure the competitiveness of young farmers across the world and effective generational renewal policies, especially in such a difficult moment, when the international community is recovering from the covid-19 pandemic.

We have been meeting over the last months to debate the most urgent issues concerning our life in rural areas and we have jointly approved this final statement that we hope you will take into account during the Youth 20 Summit.

Coherently with the 10 Elements of Agroecology developed by FAO (diversity, co-creation and sharing of knowledge, synergies, efficiency, recycling, resilience, human and social values, culture and food traditions, responsible governance, circular and solidarity economy), this document intends to encourage and guide governments toward sustainable and responsible agriculture.

Sincerely,



Consequences of the pandemic:

The pandemic has allowed many people to move to rural areas by working remotely or opening new farms. However, those who live in these areas often have to deal with a lack of basic services. The pandemic has also shortened the distance between the farmer and the consumer of many countries, who started to pay more attention to the food quality and mildly turned to buying directly in local and farmers' markets. Both attitudes were born spontaneously and now governments are expected to reinforce this tendency by supporting generational renewal in the farming sector and more in general the whole agri-food supply chain.

The ongoing pandemic has enlightened several drawbacks of the rural communities, especially due to the digital divide and infrastructure in rural areas. The pandemic evidenced the importance of the internet and digitization as key drivers for today's agri-food business and young people are the ones who mostly make great use of new informatics tools for educational, networking, and business purposes.

Thanks to the definition as "essential activities" of the agricultural industries during the lockdowns, the society has shone a spotlight on the industry which we have not had before. Thankfully, the image of farming as indispensable in the chain to ensure access to healthy and local food, clothing and energy, improved significantly.

Climate change:

Young farmers are a key solution in the fight against climate change. However, at the same time, agriculture is a victim of this phenomenon. Many countries are already suffering extreme conditions, such as numerous fires, droughts, floods and freezing temperatures. Climate change also affects water availability, biodiversity and soil fertility, thus jeopardizing food quality and food security. Young farmers are on the frontline in the research and adoption of innovative technologies counteracting and adapting to the changing weather. Thanks to agriculture, carbon emissions are offset by agriculture's capabilities to capture and store such emissions.

Governments, together with the private sector, should both support research tailored for climate change in agriculture and develop economic tools to manage climate change impacts (such as soft insurances, compensation, soft loans for reconstruction after a shock, financing for active defense technologies, hydrogeological instability infrastructures) to attract young people to develop agriculture with guarantees of a decent income. A trust fund should be created to support the activity of new and young farmers, who propose innovative, sustainable and circular economy projects: small farms cannot enter into the emission compensation system and they need alternative solutions to develop remunerative sustainable projects. Additional economic aid should be addressed to young farmers who are usually more economically vulnerable.

Opportunities for the development of applied sustainable R&D solutions:

Agriculture is very peculiar and diversified along with the territories, therefore it needs tools that are both flexible and precise. Governments, together with the private sector, should enhance the international research on tailored innovative solutions for specific geo-climatic conditions, with special scores for young farmers, who are used to being the most creative and innovative side of the productive society. Innovation (such as precision agriculture and robots) should be considered in terms of product and system, thus allowing for a fair, competitive and quality agri-food value chain. In addition, international programs providing incentives to make climate change mitigation strategies -through the application of good agricultural practices- economically convenient should be set up.

Some countries face not only difficulties in accessing innovation, but also in basic solutions already solved in many countries, such as seed availability mainly due to international trade rules.

Labor:

Agricultural labor should be more protected and supported through uniform rules and equal rights (easing decent accommodation, fair working time, tools provision, union representation, etc). This creates the ground for a fairer labor market in the agricultural sector and a much more reliable and stronger relationship between the farm and the worker, who accumulates trust and specific experience.

At the same time, governments are supposed to promote the access of young people to agriculture. Public policies should thus provide the conditions for a new vision of the farmer, as a real profession with a crucial role in the agri-food supply chain. This would help also in the fair access to quality food, allowing everyone's right to eat good and quality food within a nutritious and balanced diet.

Awareness about farming and farmers:

Farmers tackle a lack of recognition from civil society; much more effort must be addressed to spread the valuable and relevant role of farmers and agriculture in the society. Governments should help more in the advertisement of local and healthy products, together with the promotion of rural areas for eco-tourism. An international communication campaign should be arranged to underline the positive role of agriculture in guaranteeing food security, fighting climate change, protecting territories, allowing employment and income for rural communities. In parallel, it is crucial to fight against fake news demonising the agri-food system.

We believe policy change requires work and dialogue, and we fight to ensure a vision in which farming serves the public interest and its consider public service.

Land Access:

In many countries access to land is one of the major problems: limited land availability, asymmetric information and high prices could prevent young people from buying it, leading to an ageing of farming community and to an increase of land rents by young farmers. In order to encourage a renewal of agriculture, public policies should prevent the non-agricultural usage of soils and define farming as a public service.

Governments and public Institutions must put in place a mandatory public policy to support and accompany the installation of young farmers, including more investments, eventually with public-private instruments, such as soft loans for the young or long-term rental contracts, and tailored fiscal policies. New entrants to agribusiness should be accompanied by mentoring programs to open the opportunity to people from urban areas and to facilitate economic, social, environmental sustainability in the long run. Public training and academic pathways should be empowered continually, to modernize farmers.

Equality along the food chain:

It is crucial to make the agri-food supply chain justly remunerative for all: from the farmer to the consumer passing through all workers and logistics. This long-lasting unfairness must be overcome promptly by empowering and spreading contracts where the price paid to workers can never be below the production costs and with fair assurance. A starting point would be to raise the mandatory environmental quality standards and social aspects of agricultural products: it is crucial to design food systems to ensure that all people have the right to access healthy, fair and culturally appropriate food. Relationships among all actors along the agrifood supply chain must be regularized and coordinated in a transparent and trustworthy manner, so that promotions in large retailers are in agreement with the production sector. At the same time, governments should promote and support the local farming model, as a powerful tool for obtaining a fair income, diversify the production, and a scheme of local production and consumption of food, combating climate change and ensuring quality.

Conclusions

This common declaration aims at letting the voice of young farmers from the world be heard, laying down the groundwork - from a young perspective - for a high-level political debate that must protect and support agriculture as an economic activity, the transition towards sustainable food systems, as well as an efficient generational renewal and the liveability of rural areas.

This declaration will not be left as a drop in the ocean, but it will represent the beginning of a proactive and efficient collaboration between young farmers' organizations at global level, aspiring to cooperate and exchange good practices. We will continue to act all together to suggest effective strategies and policies for young farmers, keeping an open dialogue with National governments, International Institutions and private sector. Moreover, after the G20, we intend to enlarge our commitment towards other young farmers' organizations from around the World in order to build an international solidarity movement for the benefit of all. No matter where in the world: sustainable and healthy agriculture is a key tool for the wellbeing and the economic growth of every country.

The undersigned 11 organizations:

Argentina



Australia



Canada



France



Italy



UK



USA



South Africa



Spain

