

## 165<sup>th</sup> Session of Council

### **Item 7.4 - Report of the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (19-21 October 2020)**

The 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean was held from 19 to 21 October 2020. Members agreed to hold the Conference virtually due to health concerns and restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, in this instance suspending all regulations of the General Rules of the Organization incompatible with a virtual environment.

In all, 545 official participants from 33 Member States virtually attended the Regional Conference, beyond the tens of thousands of public participants via webcast. Official attendees included a Prime Minister; two Vice Presidents; 92 ministers and vice ministers; 14 ambassadors; 2 States as observers; plus representatives from 10 United Nations agencies; 9 intergovernmental organizations; 10 civil society organizations; 1 representative of the Parliamentary Fronts Against Hunger; 5 private sector organizations; and 5 scientific and academic organizations.

The inaugural ceremony of the Regional Conference was held on 19 October in the presence of H.E. Mr Denis Moncada, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua, and Mr Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua welcomed participants, affirmed our country's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and stressed the importance of advancing towards a region free from hunger and extreme poverty, by promoting sustainable and inclusive rural development, and agriculture that is resilient to climate change.

The Regional Conference reviewed and discussed four items in relation to Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Matters: the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean and the response from FAO; sustainable food systems to provide healthy diets for all; Hand-in-Hand for prosperous and inclusive rural societies; and sustainable and resilient agriculture. Welcoming the proposed priorities under the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme and appreciating the support already provided to Member States, the Regional Conference recommended that FAO help to mobilize investment and partnerships to recover food and agricultural systems and rural non-farm activities. Member States supported the reformulation of the Regional Initiatives for biennium 2020-2021 and the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.

Recognizing the steps being taken to revise the Strategic Framework, Members prioritized a stronger gender focus, the inclusion of indigenous peoples, youth and resilience. Other priorities for the Strategic Framework included small producers' access to innovations and information, management of plant and animal pests and diseases, an integrated approach between urban food environments and rural areas, and the contribution of sustainable agricultural practices for achieving the SDGs. Member requested FAO's support to strengthen international food trade within the framework of a multilateral trade system, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at the center, to maintain the predictability and transparency of commercial flows. FAO's support for measures and investments oriented toward the achievement of Agenda 2030, including mobilizing private investments and environmental and climate financing, without exclusion to any category of countries, was also requested.

The Regional Conference reviewed and discussed three items in relation to Programme and Budget Matters: Results and priorities for FAO in the Latin America and Caribbean region; Improvement of

FAO's capacities to support Latin America and Caribbean Member States; and Digital innovation and agriculture. It welcomed FAO's commitment to improve innovation and digital agriculture and recommended better monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management, a stronger regional governance of FAO, a strengthened and revised Technical Cooperation Programme, and greater administrative and fiduciary decentralization.

The Regional Conference supported the Multiyear Programme of Work 2020-23 and encouraged regular and systematic reviews of performance and efficiency, and a full report at the Thirty-seventh Session.

In other matters, the Regional Conference noted the measures adopted for the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH), underlined the importance of continued negotiations in developing the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition at the 47th Session of the CFS and recognized the leadership of the region in the preparation of the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (2021). FAO's dynamism in South-South and Triangular Cooperation and partnerships with civil society, the private sector, academia, scientific research and technology institutions, agencies of the United Nations system and other resource partners were also noted. Finally, the Regional Conference welcomed the generous offer of the Government of the Republic of Ecuador to host the 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in 2022, and recommended that the offer be accepted.

*Excmo. Sr Don Edward Francisco Centeno Gadea,  
Chairperson of the 36th Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean  
Minister for Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Nicaragua*