

**Iceland's Plenary Statement**  
**Agenda Item 9 - Review of the State of Food and Agriculture**  
**44th Session of FAO Conference**

Mr Chair, Excellencies, colleagues

It is an honour to address you today at the 44th Conference of the FAO here in Rome.

Allow me to congratulate and thank the FAO for the achievements in the course of its 80 years history and its contributions to improving food systems and general wellbeing through the pursuit of scientific advances and active multilateral cooperation. Never has it been as important as now, when the geopolitical agenda has taken such negative turns, that we focus on bettering people's lives, - giving priority to those who suffer or are threatened by food insecurity and malnutrition. FAO's noble mission and mandate are as relevant as ever as it centres on the most basic of human needs.

When we look to the future, we recognize that we must invigorate our efforts to enhance sustainability and let me underline that true sustainability must be inclusive. In Iceland women are at the forefront of shaping public and private agendas: from policymaking and leadership to science and innovation. Gender equality is not only a human right—it is essential to unlocking the full potential of a just society – and, indeed, a prosperous one. We stress, therefore, that women's roles in food systems need to be fully recognised and greatly strengthened be it in local or global contexts, - be it in relation to land-based food systems or the blue economy.

As an island nation in the North Atlantic, our well-being and economic advancement have been inseparable from the ocean. Sustainable governance of our seas is not a choice, — it is vital.

We all must embrace a broader, ecosystem-based approach – one that puts biodiversity conservation at the heart of ocean policy. This means not only managing what we harvest – but also safeguarding what must remain untouched.

Iceland is firmly committed to the 30-by-30 goal and we are currently in the process of laying the groundwork for meaningful science-driven steps towards greater conservation of our Ocean.

We must also continue to champion the rule of law as regards the oceanic and marine ecosystems. Iceland continues to advocate for the central role of UNOCLOS as the legal framework by which we govern the Ocean. We strongly support its universal application and challenge other countries to swiftly secure the ratify the BBNJ Agreement.

As Chair of the Aquatic Blue Food Coalition, Iceland promotes the potential of aquatic foods to end hunger and as a vital part of sustainable food systems. Blue foods are rich in nutrients, with low carbon footprint, and can contribute meaningfully to global food security in a warming world. With thoughtful governance and innovation, the blue economy can strengthen resilience to climate change while improving nutrition and livelihoods worldwide.

Innovation, based on science and applied research, is a key enabler. We are determined to continue to share best practices through international networks like the Ocean Cluster Network to promote inclusive innovation that also addresses gender and diversity across food systems.

On land we face challenges: degradation due to deforestation, overgrazing, fragile volcanic soils. Sustainable land management and soil preservation is essential to food security. Healthy soils not only underpin agricultural productivity and biodiversity, they also sustain climate resilience. On the domestic front, our strategies include revegetation, erosion control, wetland rewetting, and afforestation to revitalize degraded landscapes, thus creating conditions for long-term food production.

In the multilateral arena Iceland will continue to share its expertise globally through the Unesco accredited GRÓ Land Restoration Training Programme, helping build local and regional capacity to enhance sustainable food production in developing countries.

In closing, we are committed to building a sustainable and resilient future through innovation and inclusion, - at sea and on land. We remain dedicated to working with all FAO members to transform food systems, protect ecosystems and ensure that both land and the Ocean remain sources of life and opportunities for generations to come.

Thank you.