

**GFFA Communiqué**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference 2017**  
**21 January 2017**

**Agriculture and Water –  
Key to Feeding the World**

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**“Agriculture and Water – Key to Feeding the World”**

**Preamble**

**We, the agriculture ministers of 83 nations**, who have assembled on 21 January 2017 for the 9th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference during the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA),

- **stress** that water is essential for life and for the progressive realisation of the right to food, particularly as drinking water and as a balance for ecosystems;
- **recognise** that the conservation, protection and sustainable use and management of water as one of the most vital natural resources for agriculture represents a global challenge of the 21st century;
- **affirm** that policy makers, civil society, the private sector and academia all have important roles to play in addressing this challenge;
- **point out** that climate change, land degradation and many trends, in particular urbanisation, economic development, population growth, migration and changing lifestyles, are exacerbating competition over water, resulting in the need for more sustainable stewardship of water, in line with the Declaration of the 8th Agriculture Ministers' Conference adopted during GFFA 2016;
- **underline** that water management needs to be integrated and inclusive, requires coordination and strategies adapted to all levels of water governance and should give due consideration to cross-sectoral approaches to address the synergies and trade-offs between the goals of food production, protection of water, land and biodiversity as well as energy use through enhanced dialogue, collaboration, coordination and policy coherence;
- **acknowledge** that the agriculture sector faces the challenge of providing a growing world population with adequate, safe and nutritious food whilst at the same time increasing the efficiency of water usage and reducing water pollution;
- **recognise** that farmers, in particular smallholders and women farmers, are facing various water-related constraints, including water scarcity and salinisation, flooding and inadequate water allocation systems;
- **emphasise** that, alongside soil and biodiversity, water is an essential natural resource used in agricultural production and that adequate and reliable access to suitable water for agriculture is consequently a prerequisite for achieving global food security and nutrition;

- **stress** that water needs to be of sufficient quality to ensure the safety of agricultural products and the preservation of healthy soil ecosystems;
- **acknowledge** that the sustainable and efficient use and management of freshwater resources, including groundwater, is essential for agriculture and for other uses;
- **are convinced** that sustainable water management across scales is an important means of increasing agricultural productivity;
- **stress** the need to protect and restore aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, in particular forests and wetlands, due to the important role that they play regionally and worldwide as natural water reservoirs, as water filters, in erosion control and flood management and in the global water cycle;
- **underline** the great potential of agriculture, as the largest water user worldwide, for contributing to sustainable water management, water quality and availability;
- **acknowledge** the efforts made by the agriculture sector so far to improve or maintain good water quality;
- **will work to ensure** that agriculture shoulders its share of responsibility in achieving and maintaining good status of water bodies, including water quality and quantity;
- **are determined** to promote adaptation measures consistent with wider national and regional adaptation strategies, thereby building on the 6th Agriculture Ministers' Declaration from GFFA 2014, in order to make agriculture more resilient both to stress factors, in particular those of climate change such as temperature rise and altered precipitation patterns, and to the impact of these stress factors on water availability and water quality;
- **stress** the need for agricultural risk management instruments to cope with adverse weather events (such as droughts and floods) and climate change;
- **underline** the need to develop coherent strategies and policies on the conservation, protection and sustainable use and management of water and on the reconciliation of different interests among water users at all levels;
- **underline** the need to include agriculture in these strategies and policies to enable agriculture to continue fulfilling its role in providing adequate and nutritious food for the growing global population;
- **acknowledge** the need to take conservation, protection and sustainable use and management of water into account in agricultural and related policies;
- **acknowledge** the need to establish and expand water-related information systems, building on other existing monitoring initiatives, in order to improve water management in agriculture and develop early warning mechanisms that can be made available to agriculture;
- **will provide** impetus with this declaration, in particular for the G20 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting 2017 in Berlin (Germany);

- **acknowledge** the
  - final report of the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB 2015) and its structural recommendations for a more effective global water architecture;
  - Action Plan issued by the United Nations/World Bank High Level Panel on Water in September 2016 (HLPW);
  
- **firmly endorse** the implementation of the
  - 2030 Agenda’s Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those relating to food and water;
  - UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement (COP21, COP22), in force since 4 November 2016, subject to ratification;
  - New Urban Agenda – Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All;
  - recommendations of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in its 42nd session on “Water for Food Security and Nutrition”;
  - initiative by FAO and its partners entitled “Coping with water scarcity in agriculture: A global framework for action in a changing climate” (2016).

## Call for Action

**We, the agriculture ministers assembled at GFFA 2017,** intend to meet the following four challenges in order to safeguard the supply of and access to safe and nutritious food for a growing world population, giving due regard to each country's local conditions:

### Enhancing access to water

We intend to

1. establish and strengthen arrangements to improve water allocation systems, e.g. through regulatory or market-driven mechanisms, to promote inclusive access and the efficient and sustainable use of water;
2. reduce incentives conducive to water mismanagement gradually and in a socially acceptable manner, while protecting the most vulnerable, in order to promote efficient water use and reduce water wastage;
3. integrate agriculture into local and regional initiatives with the aim of striking a balance between different user interests and managing competition, inter alia by making efficient use of water;
4. promote responsible investment in the development, maintenance, rehabilitation, modernisation and expansion of water infrastructure, while taking into account local conditions, in order to enable farmers, in particular youth, smallholders and women farmers, to have sufficient access to suitable water;
5. establish and strengthen cooperation to develop policies that encourage water conservation and the use of brackish water and of efficient technologies for wastewater treatment, recycling and water and nutrient re-use whilst complying with food safety, environmental and nature protection standards that are backed by supportive implementation measures.

### Improving water quality

We intend to

1. use, conserve, protect and rehabilitate soils so that they can fulfil their natural functions, e.g. as a filter and buffer to protect water resources and to prevent sedimentation and degradation such as erosion or salinisation;
2. develop and implement corresponding management strategies to reduce pollutant loads from agriculture in water and water-related ecosystems by promoting water-friendly agricultural practices and animal-husbandry management;
3. make available knowledge, technologies (including ICT) and experience relating to methods for the maintenance or improvement of water quality.

### Reducing water scarcity risks

We intend to

1. increase productivity and water-use efficiency in agriculture (irrigated and rain-fed), taking into account local, national and regional conditions (optimising "crop per drop", reducing water losses and waste, and using proper irrigation technologies);
2. share information and experience on water-efficient farming methods (e.g. precision farming, no-till farming) on a voluntary basis and support their practical implementation, including sustainable soil management;
3. foster the dissemination of ICT technologies as an important tool to improve agricultural water-use efficiency;

4. promote research and development on innovative production methods and technologies to improve water-use efficiency;
5. intensify research and development, and strengthen international research-and-development structures, in order to improve the drought stress tolerance and water-use efficiency of crops and livestock, in particular those important for food security and nutrition;
6. promote innovative approaches to improve water availability for agricultural purposes, including the re-use of waste water or rain water harvesting;
7. encourage national and local agronomically suitable agricultural production systems in order to maximise efficiency of water use.

### **Managing surplus water**

We intend to

1. promote investment in water infrastructure in line with the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI) and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT), and the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management developed by the Global Soil Partnership, including investments in retention measures to protect against flooding;
2. support sustainable land management and farming methods that improve the water infiltration and water retention capacity of soil, enhance the productive use of rain-water and provide proper drainage;
3. use retention and storage methods to make excess rain and flood water available for use in agriculture in a stable and sustainable manner, and strengthen our research-and-development efforts in that regard.

## Conclusion

### **We, the agriculture ministers, agree that**

- we will continue to shoulder our responsibility for better stewardship of water as a scarce resource and contribute to safeguarding water quality through sustainable water management and production methods in agriculture;
- agriculture needs adequate and reliable access to suitable water as a production resource in order to feed the growing world population without endangering the natural resource base and compromising the availability of safe drinking water;
- we must strengthen efforts in the research and development of technologies, including ICT applications, to improve the efficiency of water use in agriculture;
- we must improve access to education, training, extension services and know-how, and enhance capacity building and the use of technology, including enhanced trade in efficient water-use technologies and services, in order to meet the challenges mentioned above and sensitise farmers and agricultural extension officers regarding the sustainable management of water;
- it is important to support implementation and financing mechanisms proven to help achieve these objectives, particularly with respect to the poorest countries, such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) and those provided by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD);
- agriculture plays a relevant role and bears responsibility in the sustainable stewardship of water at all levels. We therefore call upon the international community, in particular relevant United Nations organisations such as FAO, as well as OECD and World Bank Group, to
  - enhance the sharing of information and dissemination of experience on sustainable water management and technologies in agriculture;
  - further develop and strengthen the international water architecture in order to enhance its political impact;
  - ensure that agriculture is integrated as a key actor within the international water architecture;
  - promote the extensive participation of stakeholders and the application of cross-sectoral, local and regional policy approaches, including sustainable land management, in structuring global water policy;
- initiatives and measures implemented in or as a result of this communiqué will not impose unjustifiable barriers to trade and will respect WTO commitments.

We welcome the fact that the G20 Agriculture Ministers will address the topic of "Agriculture and Water" as part of their meeting in Berlin.