

3 August 2021

Hon. Damien O'Connor

Chair, Food Security Ministerial Meeting
Minister of Agriculture
New Zealand

Dear Minister,

The APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) is pleased to submit our recommendations to you and your colleagues as you meet to discuss the region's food security needs and challenges, especially at this difficult time.

This is a critical topic. Our ABAC theme for 2021 – “People, Place and Prosperity, or *Tāngata, Taiao me te Taurikura*” – puts the needs and interests of our people at the heart of everything we do. Nothing is more fundamental than ensuring everyone in our community has sufficient, safe and nutritious food.

The food system is a foundational building block for creating the kind of Asia-Pacific community to which all APEC economies aspire in the Putrajaya Vision. Put simply, we cannot achieve an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful region without ensuring that all of APEC's people have access to sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food, and that the food system functions in a way that contributes to their economic development and to sustainable livelihoods.

The daunting collective challenges we face mean that APEC economies must redouble their efforts to achieve such a food system, and to continue to work in close partnership with the private sector to that end. Those challenges include the continued impact of the pandemic, climate change and other natural disasters, ongoing high levels of food loss and waste, and a growing population, along with continuing distortions and impediments in the trading system.

ABAC is fully committed to playing its part in this effort, through the Policy Partnership on Food Security (PPFS) – which was established, as you will recall, at our initiative. In particular, we are eager to support the development and implementation of a new APEC Food Security Roadmap towards 2030 which gives preeminence to:

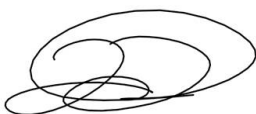
- A **whole-of-system approach**, with sustainability at its heart, that recognizes the interdependence of all elements of the system from production to distribution to trade to consumption. At the foundation of this approach should be structural reform to identify and reduce environmentally-harmful subsidies to the food sector and to boost support for approaches that support good environmental as well as food security outcomes. This approach will help foster resilience, inclusion and mutually-beneficial outcomes for the food sector and the environment.

- A **digitally-enabled food system**, in which innovative technologies are able to be leveraged seamlessly throughout the value chain to improve efficiency, equity and sustainability. This requires action in the areas of infrastructure and investment (including public-private partnerships), capacity-building, and the establishment of a region-wide interoperable data and regulatory environment. The annex has further details on our priorities in this area.
- The recognition of the role of a **well-functioning, predictable, open and inclusive trading system** in achieving durable food security, improved livelihoods and economic growth. APEC economies must press ahead with reforms to enable the full realization of the Bogor Goals and the Putrajaya Vision in the food sector, including in respect of tariffs, non-tariff barriers, production-distorting subsidies and impediments to trade in food-related services and investment, along with tangible progress towards the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. This will help reduce the barriers that stand in the way of making sufficient, safe and nutritious food available to all in our communities, and creating opportunities for decent livelihoods in the sector.

This is a momentous year, marked by the development of a new Roadmap for Food Security Towards 2030, the UN Food Systems Summit and the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference. There has never been a more important time to affirm our commitment to an APEC food system that can efficiently and sustainably connect production, processing, distribution, trade and consumption, underpinned by digital technologies, providing sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food to all, and enabled to create fair opportunities for our communities to participate in and benefit from the food sector.

We call on APEC economies to embrace this commitment and to work in an effective partnership with the private sector to that end, as a central element in achieving sustainable growth, equitable development, resilience and stability in the APEC region into the future.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Taulelei
ABAC Chair 2021

Annex: ABAC Priorities for a Digitally-Enabled Food System

Our aim is to achieve a digitally-enabled food system in which all parts of the food value chain are able to leverage and optimize the benefits of digital technologies. This requires action across a number of fronts including:

- **Enhanced infrastructure.** Speed up the construction and upgrade of digitally-enabled infrastructure, promote access to ‘smart’ production technologies such as agritech, expand broadband coverage into rural, coastal/marine and remote areas and make use of cutting-edge spatial technologies
 - **Expanded Capacity-building.** Promote upskilling in the use of innovative products and technologies throughout the food value chain. Launch digital skills and literacy campaigns, enhance training and capability in the use of technologies such as artificial intelligence and precision agriculture, digitally-enabled supply chains, innovative financial technologies and the use of e-commerce channels, and provide real-time production and market information to farmers, making use of existing platforms such as the Asia-Pacific Information Platform on Food Security (APIP).
 - **Disseminated practices.** Keep service provider entry barriers low to push forward the development of digitally-enabled food-related services. Strengthen public-private collaboration with private sector, universities and research institutes, and farmers to jointly disseminate locally-appropriate models or platforms.
 - **Interoperable data and systems.** Ensure good data governance, support digitalization and interoperability of digital systems and trade flows (including promoting interoperable electronic sanitary and phytosanitary certificates and other digital trade documents; upgrading interoperable “single window” capabilities; promoting the adoption of Global Data Standards and other enabling technologies for supply chains).
 - **Continuous innovation.** Foster an enabling environment for innovation and strengthen investment to remove barriers to the uptake of key technologies and models in digital agriculture.
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