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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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THE GLOBAL TRANSITION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS*

COMMUNICATION FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION AND NORWAY

The following document, received on 29 October 2021, is being circulated at the request of the Delegations of the European Union and Norway.

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1. The first-ever UN Food Systems Summit was convened by the UN Secretary-General on 23-24 September 2021 with the aim to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient food systems.
 2. The outcome of the Summit, presented in the 'Statement of Action'¹ by the UN Secretary-General, confirms that sustainable food systems are critical for delivering on all of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and an essential solution to address our planetary crisis. In 2020, nearly half of the world population could not afford a healthy diet. At the same time, food systems contributed up to 30% of greenhouse gas emissions, up to 80% of biodiversity loss, and use up to 70% of freshwater.
 3. The Summit helped identify the necessary urgent actions to feed a growing global population while protecting our planet. There is no one size fits all. All actions have to be tailored to the local, national or regional contexts. Therefore, the WTO should play a major role in supporting sustainability objectives in relation to trade in agricultural and fishery products, while – at the same time – preventing any disguised restrictions on international trade and contributing to an even economic development, especially in least developed countries.
 4. A One-Health approach, recognizing the strong interconnection between our health, the health of animals and plants, and the environment, is identified as vital for resilient economies. Two elements of the One-Health triad fall under the SPS Agreement. Therefore, the objectives of the SPS Agreement cannot be furthered in isolation from the current global challenges. The SPS Committee should become a forum where Members reflect on what should be done to make trade a major contributor to sustainable food systems and a sustainable future.
 5. We invite Members to actively support this initiative and to help shape a work programme to address issues related to the transition to sustainable food systems in relation with international trade. As a starting point for discussion, we propose to identify a list of policy objectives that can be legitimately pursued, considering the need to mainstream sustainability aspects in all relevant fora. This and other relevant committees could report on key findings and actions undertaken as a result of this work to the Thirteenth Ministerial Conference with recommendations, as appropriate.

* See [G/SPS/GEN/1934](https://www.wto.org/press/pr/2021/21-8291.htm).

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/making-food-systems-work-people-planet-and-prosperity>.