

PRESS RELEASE

Building Sustainable Food Systems Together

European Union and Central America cooperating towards Sustainable Food Systems for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and the environment.

Accelerating the transition towards sustainable food systems is a commitment of the international community that calls for strategic partnerships. With the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy, the Green Deal recognizes that Food Systems, through global anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, contribute for climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental and ocean degradation, posing threats to human life and life on Earth.

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It is in this context, that the European Union (EU) – Latin America and the Caribbean *Dialogues on Sustainable Food Systems* are organized, aiming to promote a constructive exchange of ideas to find common grounds and initiatives that can pave the way for further collaborations to push food systems towards sustainability.

On March 22 and 23, policy makers from the EU and Central America engaged in the first online Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems. Both days counted with the presence of representatives of the EU, the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA, per its Spanish acronym), the Ministries of Agriculture of the Central American governments, as well as representatives of the Central American private sector.

Substantial progress was made in understanding the perspectives, and strategies of both sides, as well as the need to work together on the global transition towards Sustainable Food Systems. While on the first day of the workshop, speakers from the EU and Central America had fruitful exchanges on regional perspectives related to the topic, the second day was focused on some key elements on which bi-regional strategies and cooperation could be further developed,

discussing the issues of healthy soils, sustainable use of pesticides, and food loss and waste as decisive parameters of sustainable food systems.

The Dialogue was opened by Sandra Gallina, Director General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) of the European Commission, and Francisco Lima Mena, Secretary General of SIECA. Sandra Gallina stressed that the EU is committed to engaging in constructive dialogues with its partners on the well-known EU's priorities, inviting Central America to identify and share its own priorities in order to work together on issues of common interest. She also recalled that both regions are united by an Association Agreement that celebrates 10 years of existence. The Agreement has made it possible to increase exchanges and strengthen cooperation between the two regions, making them strategic partners in the joint construction of Sustainable Food Systems. Francisco Lima Mena, on his part, acknowledged that the series of exceptional circumstances we are going through, such as the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and with it the global threat to food security, show the enormous fragility of the supply chains and the imperative need to work together in the transition towards Sustainable Food Systems. Moreover, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), food systems are currently responsible globally for about one-third of total greenhouse gas emissions. Added to this, the consequences of climate change such as droughts, floods, fires, or new pests pose a serious threat to today's food systems.

As a result of the event, the speakers agreed to continue the dialogue to act together and build synergies between approaches to enable the transition to Sustainable and more resilient Food Systems at global level.

These Dialogues will consist of a total of four sub-regional workshops, being this first edition with Central America, and concluding with a bi-regional conference expected to take place at the end of 2022.