

Ambassador's word

Dear friends,

I am delighted to bring you this special edition of AgriSustainability Matters, featuring an article by the Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, Ms Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias.

The purpose of our bulletin is to contribute to the multifaceted debate on the sustainability of agricultural production. We have given voice to nongovernmental experts before and will continue to do so. The plurality of perspectives is certainly at the core of AgriSustainability Matters.

In this special edition, Minister Tereza Cristina offers us a comprehensive and straightforward overview of Brazilian public policy priorities in terms of sustainable agricultural technology; tackling land ownership and environmental issues; and the integration of family farming into global value chains, with a view to fighting poverty.

Of course, Ms Tereza Cristina's piece carries the authority she has as the Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply — to give her full official title. But it also reflects her longstanding experience in the field as a Congresswoman, an entrepreneur and an agronomic engineer in her own right.

Now as ever, agrisustainability matters.

Enjoy the reading.

Fred Arruda, Ambassador of Brazil to the UK

Brazil: Agriculture, Sustainability and the Future We Want

Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias - Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply



The multidimensional crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed harsh social and economic sacrifices upon all countries, highlighting the links between sustainability, health and the environment. The world now faces the complex challenge of defeating the pandemic and reactivating economic activity through sustainability and resilience, while accelerating the fight against climate change.

In Brazil, agriculture will play a major role in this process. By synergistically integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, Brazilian tropical agriculture becomes one of the pillars of inclusive economic recovery, generating income and employment for the population without neglecting the conservation of the country's biomes and ecosystems.

Based on a vision of Brazil as the world's top food supplier, we have structured the work of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply around three strategic goals: intensifying the use of sustainable agricultural technologies; addressing, as a matter of urgency, land-ownership and environmental liabilities; and expanding the integration of family farming into global value chains, thus reducing rural poverty.

With regard to the first goal, we are setting new targets for the Low Carbon Agriculture Plan (ABC Plan), which is our main tool to encourage sustainable practices such as pasture recovery, crop-livestock-forest integration, biological nitrogen fixation and no-till farming. We are also working to strengthen the bio-economy, encouraging the use of biological products, such as bio-fertilisers and natural pesticides, and progressively reducing the use of chemical pesticides and the dependence on imported inputs. Furthermore, in partnership with the Climate Bonds Initiative, we are working to structure the national market of green bonds, in order to increase the share of green finance in Brazilian agriculture.

The regularisation of land tenure and environmental compliance, the second of MAPA's strategic goals, has become an urgent priority in view of our country's socio-economic reality. In the Legal Amazon, the vast majority of the beneficiaries occupy an average area of 66 hectares and obtain an average monthly household income of 1.01 times the minimum wage, or about €158. For them, regularization means, above all, citizenship and social inclusion. In addition to ensuring access to public policies, formal tenure of the land allows owners to take responsibility for its conservation, facilitating compliance with the Brazilian Forest Code and the fight against environmental crimes, such as illegal deforestation. Land-use planning, therefore, is essential to reconcile environmental protection with sustainable alternatives for development.

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Strengthening family farming and combatting rural poverty is the third strategic goal of the Ministry of Agriculture. The challenge is, on the one hand, to upscale profits and expand the integration of the most efficient producers into global value chains and, on the other hand, to step up support for the most vulnerable, by encouraging the modernisation of their practices and the reduction of rural poverty.

The aforementioned strategic goals express the firm commitment of the Brazilian farming sector to the relentless pursuit of sustainability. The country’s efforts, however, must not be seen in isolation from the global situation.

Every country on the planet is facing the imperative of green recovery, albeit with varying degrees of intensity, which makes international cooperation an essential part of the solution. We need more trade and less protectionism; more harmonisation and less distancing; more cooperation and less misrepresentation.

International trade is a strong driver of sustainability. It expands the demand for sustainable agricultural products and acts as a catalyst for the adoption of best practices in production.

The Association Agreement between Mercosur and the European Union is a clear example of this relationship. The chapter on trade and sustainable development reaffirms the commitment of both parties in terms of sustainability and climate change, protection of biodiversity, and sustainable management of forests and fisheries. The chapters on sanitary and phytosanitary issues and technical barriers, in turn, set high standards of production to ensure the protection of human health and the safety of food traded between the parties. Therefore, the ratification and entry into force of the Agreement is the best way to strengthen the cooperation between Brazil and the European Union on the sustainability agenda.

Conversely, punitive approaches, based on the unilateral imposition of trade barriers linked to environmental criteria, are clearly counterproductive. On the one hand, those producers who have already achieved a high level of sustainability in their production are deprived of remuneration. On the other hand, any incentives for further improvement are taken away from the least efficient producers, thus prompting them to seek less-demanding markets.

