

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a great honor to speak at this important conference today. We are here because we recognize a fundamental truth: Our agri-food systems, especially our land resources are under immense pressure. Against the background of continued global population growth, they are failing to ensure food security while contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation.
- Incremental improvements are no longer enough. What we need is a transformation — one that moves us towards nature-positive, resilient, and inclusive agrifood systems. This is a matter of urgency. For the eradication of hunger and poverty this transformation is absolutely essential. i. And it requires collective action, innovative solutions, and bold investment.

[The Path to Transformation: A Holistic Approach]

- A key part of this transformation is shifting towards nature-positive production systems that not only conserve but actively restore ecosystems. Sustainable food systems must align food security and economic growth with long-term environmental resilience.
- To create an enabling environment for transformation, in our view the concept of agroecology is key – as it offers a holistic, science-based sustainable approach. Agroecology integrates ecological principles with equitable social and economic systems. It enhances rural resilience, reduces input dependency, and strengthens ecosystem functions.
- But for agroecology to succeed, farmers need secure land rights, access to training, and a voice in decision-making. Local governments, scientists, and farmers must work together to ensure fair policies and investments that support long-term sustainability.

[Scaling Innovation: Reliable Finance and strong partnerships needed]

- The financial gap for food systems transformation remains significant. Current financing does not match the scale of the challenge.
- The *State of Finance for Nature* report estimates that annual investments in land restoration must triple by 2025 and quadruple by 2030. Governments, financial institutions, and the private sector must work together to mobilize resources.

Governments should also repurpose harmful subsidies while increasing investment in sustainable agriculture.

- Scaling transformation requires strong partnerships: regarding public-private partnerships, innovative financing, and participatory approaches that empower farmers and communities.
- In addition, we need to think research and innovation in conjunction and break down silos. We must bring all relevant disciplines to the table - from traditional agricultural sciences to the societal, economic, and political dimensions that shape our food systems.
- And, wherever innovation happens, scaling must be part of the plan from the start. Where obstacles arise, we must have a system in place to respond. A structured feedback loop must connect research and practice.
- Germany is committed to this approach. The BMZ-funded *Green Innovation Centers*, active in 16 countries and with a total investment of over 550 million Euros [563 Mio. Euro], exemplify this. Since 2014, over two million smallholder farmers have achieved an average 33% productivity increase. This was facilitated through co-developing, testing and scaling innovations in cooperation with national and international research centers and local communities.

[Agricultural Research as a Cornerstone of Transformation]

- Of course, agricultural research is the centerpiece of innovation. At BMZ we just commemorated 50 years of continuous funding to the Global Research Partnership for a food-secure Future, CGIAR. This network of leading international agricultural research centers is a key source of innovation. And it builds a cornerstone for the transformation of agriculture and food systems.
- With the EU Commission we share the view, that research is very important to inspire development paths. Innovative results from research institutes can then be scaled up by different stakeholders to successfully contribute to achieving the SDGs.

[Global Programmes ProSoil and SoilMatters]

- Over the past decade, the Global Programme Soil Protection and Rehabilitation for Food Security (ProSoil), co-funded by the EU under DeSIRA and with a total budget

of 240 million EUR, has demonstrated six main key lessons for scaling research and innovation:

1. **Integration:** Research must be embedded in broader development goals. In Ethiopia, for example, a co-created Decision-Support Tool for integrated fertilizer application is now institutionalized at the national level.
 2. **Co-creation and participation:** Innovations are most effective when researchers, farmers, and extension workers collaborate. In Madagascar and Ethiopia, sustainable dialogue formats ensure knowledge exchange beyond project duration.
 3. **Farmer-Centered Research:** Farmers and rural households must be actively involved in research and scaling. Farmer-led research drives long-term sustainability and uptake.
 4. **Evidence-Based Decision-Making:** Research must provide evidence to inform policies. FAO's Agroecology Performance Evaluation tool applied in ProSoil countries demonstrated agroecology's benefits for soil health, biodiversity, and food security.
 5. **Private sector engagement:** Business models are crucial for scaling innovations. In Ethiopia and India, ProSoil has co-developed scalable models for agroecological inputs. In Kenya, the private sector is driving subsidies and distribution for organic fertilizers.
 6. **Institutional Commitment:** Sustainable scaling requires long-term institutional engagement. In Benin, for example, soil protection has been integrated into extension services, municipal plans, and national strategies.
- Building on ProSoil's success, Germany is now launching the Global Programme Soil Matters – Innovations for Soil Health and Agroecology, with a total budget of up to 20,5 million EUR co-funded by the EU via DeSIRA+. This initiative will mobilize public, private, and civil society actors to scale up innovations for soil health and agroecology. It will also focus on regional and international agenda setting in order to scale up the successful approaches developed in the ProSoil project.

[Outlook]

Ladies and gentlemen,

- we need to work together — governments, research institutions, the private sector, civil society, and farmers themselves. Only through collaboration we can align research with action, scale innovations effectively, and build resilient agrifood systems that serve both people and the planet.
- Germany stands ready to continue its commitment. Together, let us turn knowledge into impact, and innovation into transformation.

Thank you.