



The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

CC: to be added with USAID included

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Blinken:

Thank you for the continued leadership you and your teams are providing as we all prepare for the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UN FSS) later this month. As co-regulators with the federal government, we at the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) stand with you in strong state-federal partnerships to achieve the mission and goals of the UN FSS. Such partnerships will be critical to moving from a “think-tank” approach to sustainable food systems to a “do-tank” approach (as stated by A.G. Kawamura, past NASDA president, past California Secretary of Agriculture, and a founder of Solutions from the Land, in a Department of State-hosted UNFSS listening session, Sept 3, 2021).

Serving as the unified voice on behalf of the state departments of agriculture for all 50 states and four territories, the NASDA is a leader on and problem solver of our nation’s most important agricultural and agriculturally related issues. Our members are at the forefront of a wide range of food and agricultural issues - food insecurity, environmental conservation, and the sustainability of agriculture to include education and outreach to under-served farmers and ranchers as well as efforts focused on diversity, equity and inclusion for future agricultural leaders. NASDA members can deliver on their incredibly broad charge due to their positions to influence policy, their closeness to America’s farmers, ranchers, and consumers, their ability to connect all facets of the food supply chain, and an enduring sense of duty to serve their state and industry.

We recognize that vital role that agriculture plays in a stable society, both here in the United States and globally. As such, we strongly support the UN FSS and its goals, as well as the effort to meet the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, we agree that these efforts must be founded in science and evidence-based decision-making, practices, and programs to achieve sustainable, nutritious, and safe foods and reduce hunger to zero. What the UN FSS seeks to achieve is an ambitious task, and we applaud the U. S. government's strategic interagency process to bring as many resources and voices to bear on this work as possible.

NASDA fully supports and applauds the leadership of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Deputy Secretary Bronaugh, as the U. S. delegation lead for the upcoming Summit. Her ability to identify and articulate the issues, and provide strong solutions to enhance U.S. agriculture, will ensure success at the Summit and beyond. The USDA has the expertise and data that will ensure that global food systems will continue to start with agriculture.

There are several key priorities of NASDA that align with the UN FSS efforts:

- **Focus on the farmer.** The farmer and rancher at the local level must be at the center of the effort to achieve sustainable food systems. We support a food system that equitably enhances human well-being and achieves zero hunger. We recognize farmers and ranchers of all sizes, ethnicities, production systems, commodities, or food products as valuable to a sustainable food system. That is why the farmer must be the primary focus and voice.
- **Food and agricultural systems are diverse.** There is no "one size fits all" approach to a sustainable food system and agricultural production. Food systems must consider the holistic environmental, social, and economic priorities for farmers in crop and livestock production, and other post-harvest priorities of food safety, nutrition, and food access.
- **Partnerships are necessary.** The SDGs articulate a focus on partnerships. As state departments of agriculture, we know that partnerships are necessary to envision, articulate, develop, and implement any program. To promote food security, reduce hunger, and enhance climate resiliency, there must be a recognition of the need for strong effective partnerships among public entities such as state, local, tribal, and federal governments, and with other food and agriculture stakeholders, including consumers. No one group, state or organization can take on the issues alone and succeed. Without such partnerships, and leadership to implement strategy and provide financial resources, the solutions will not be achieved.

- **Success requires local leadership.** NASDA supports the Action Area proposed as Means of Implementation, because it underscores the essentiality of proven experience and leadership in finance, governance, science and knowledge, innovation, technology, and data capacity. Such leadership is vital to implement strategy and provide avenues toward financial resources. State departments of agriculture are best suited to move the U.S. food system to sustainability, while balancing productivity, zero hunger, and resource conservation.

Recognizing that the Summit is, in essence, a starting point for global food systems engagement, it is imperative U. S. government leadership continues after the event. NASDA urges you to stay involved in the action steps, including the development and evolution of coalitions of action and national pathways. NASDA looks forward to working with you as you continue to lead. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of service, (Elizabeth Rowland, Elizabeth.rowland@nasda.org).

Thank you again for your robust leadership of the UN FSS.

Sincerely,



Barbara P. Glenn, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer