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PRESS RELEASE

Belize Highlights Digital Innovation and Climate-smart Action in Agri-food Transformation at LARC39

Belmopan, March 11, 2026.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concluded the 39th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC39), which brought together representatives from countries across the region in Brasília from March 2 to March 6, to define priorities and strategic orientations that will guide the Organization's work during the 2026–2027 biennium.

During five days of deliberations, Member States examined the main challenges facing agrifood systems in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the persistence of hunger and all forms of malnutrition, growing vulnerability to climate change, increasing pressure on natural resources such as water, soils, and forests, and the need to expand public and private investment in the sector.

Participating in the Ministerial Roundtable on Driving agrifood systems transformation: Key triggers and strategies for transforming agrifood systems in Latin America and the Caribbean, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and New Growth Industries, Hon. Rodwell Ferguson, underscored the urgency of accelerating innovation and resilience measures in the face of mounting climate and production risks. He noted, "Pest and diseases which are linked to climate change and environmental factors can affect our Food and Nutrition Security, availability, accessibility & affordability."

Referencing Belize's national experience, Minister Ferguson pointed to ongoing threats affecting sugar cane, banana, and citrus production, while highlighting the importance of technical cooperation and coordinated support from regional and international partners to address emerging plant diseases and production risks. He added, "Therefore, as a country and as a region, transforming the agrifood system is a must, and as such we must move towards digital and technological innovation such as precision agriculture, biotechnology, early warning systems, anticipatory actions, and data-driven decisions."

"Allow me to reiterate FAO's commitment. We will continue working with Member States to implement the priorities defined here: strengthening food

security and nutrition; promoting evidence-based policies; mobilizing investments; advancing technological and digital innovation; reinforcing resilience to crises; and supporting the development of more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems," said the FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rene Orellana Halkyer.

As a result of the Conference, countries adopted by consensus a final report establishing a regional roadmap to advance towards more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems.

Among the key messages emerging from LARC39 was the need to intensify efforts to eradicate hunger in the region, leveraging its significant productive potential and its strategic role in global food security. Discussions also underscored the importance of strengthening evidence-based public policies, promoting technological and digital innovation, and accelerating the adoption of sustainable practices to address the impacts of climate change.

The Conference also highlighted the fundamental role of climate action, sustainable natural resource management, and the One Health approach in ensuring food security and nutrition for populations.

Countries agreed that mobilizing investments will be essential to advancing this agenda, requiring stronger strategic partnerships and efforts to close the financing gaps that hinder the transformation of agrifood systems.

In a global context marked by multiple crises, Member States also reaffirmed the importance of regional cooperation, South–South cooperation, and multilateralism as essential tools to address shared challenges and accelerate sustainable development.

The Conference saw broad regional and international participation. A total of 512 participants from 32 Member States attended, including one Head of State, 42 ministers, vice-ministers and permanent secretaries, 22 ambassadors, as well as representatives of international organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, parliamentary fronts against hunger, and the private sector.

In addition, more than 7,000 people followed the sessions through FAO's digital platforms and social media, reflecting growing regional interest in the future of agrifood systems.

With the adoption of the final report, FAO and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean now move toward implementing the agreed priorities, aimed at strengthening food security and nutrition, promoting innovation, mobilizing investment, and reinforcing the resilience of the region's agrifood systems.

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