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Written Correspondence Procedure – inputs from Members – Original language

ERC/26/4 – Financing agrifood systems

Member	ERC Document reference	Statement
Belgium	ERC/26/4	Belgium thanks FAO for the comprehensive document on financing agrifood systems. We particularly welcome its systems-based approach, which highlights the interactions between policy frameworks, institutional capacity and access to finance at macro, meso and micro levels. This approach is essential to move beyond fragmented actions and to achieve a genuine transformation of our agrifood systems. Over recent years, Belgium has reinforced its financial commitment to agrifood systems. In 2024, 212 million euros of Belgium's ODA went to enhance Global Food Security and making Food Systems more resilient and sustainable around the world. In Wallonia, more than 90 million euros have been invested over the past three years in sustainable food policy, largely through European funding instruments. These investments enabled the activation of key strategic levers and supported the development of innovative and transformative solutions across the agrifood value chain, notably in agroecology, short supply chains, food system resilience and resource efficiency. Belgium is home to a dynamic ecosystem of small and medium-sized enterprises that play a vital role in the economic landscape. However, start-ups and SMEs remain financially vulnerable and highly exposed to crises. Recent events such as the 2021–2022 energy crisis and the current geopolitical context have highlighted the sector's vulnerability to energy costs and external shocks. Supporting innovation is therefore essential to develop more efficient tools and energy-saving processes. In this regard, two major economic risks for the agrifood sector deserve particular attention: energy consumption and the affordability of agricultural land. Belgium therefore fully supports the call to move beyond fragmented financing approaches. Better strategic alignment would allow for clearer objectives and more coherent funding criteria, thereby improving the effectiveness of the actions undertaken as well as the human and financial resources deployed. In this context the necessary considerations should be given to innovative and different financing mechanisms, like cooperation with private partners.

		Belgium also wishes to stress the importance of breaking down silos in order to promote an integrated food policy. Such an approach helps to anticipate unintended consequences and to identify synergies between policies when addressing the many challenges facing agrifood systems. Indeed, public instruments such as programmes, initiatives, grants or policies, often fund the agricultural and food sectors only partially, alongside other sectors. Finally, Belgium reaffirms its commitment to working with FAO and all partners to promote a coherent, systems-based approach to financing agrifood systems, in Europe and beyond, in support of sustainability, resilience, food security and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
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