Vision for Food & Agriculture in the Americas

White Paper of the Food and Agribusiness Working Group of the Americas Business Dialogue

americas business dialogue

Foreword from the Food and Agribusiness Working Group Chair

Agriculture is more than an economic driver—it is the backbone of food security, sustainability, and social progress across the Americas. Our region holds a unique and powerful position as a global hub for sustainable food production, with vast arable land, biodiversity, and a resilient workforce. But realizing our full potential requires a shared commitment, collective action, and breakthrough innovation to make our food systems more productive, inclusive, and sustainable.

This white paper, developed by the members of the **Americas Business Dialogue's Food & Agribusiness Working Group**, lays out a bold vision: positioning the Americas as the "*food basket of the world*" while integrating sustainability and resilience at every stage of the food value chain. This means increasing agricultural output, investing in climate smart practices and digital transformation, and collaborating between countries on relevant policies to drive long-term food security and economic stability.

To achieve this vision will require addressing critical barriers, such as extreme weather events, water scarcity, workforce migration, and digital gaps—all of which continue to hinder progress. By embracing public/private collaboration, investing in agro-tech innovations, and providing farmer-centric incentives to increase uptake across growers of all sizes, we can help to overcome these barriers. Critically, our success relies on working together, sharing useful knowledge, and fostering fair systems. In doing so, we can help build a resilient and future-ready agricultural sector that unlocks new opportunities.

As we prepare for the **Summit of the Americas in December 2025**, this white paper serves as a strategic roadmap—a foundation for the conversations and commitments that will shape the future of food and agriculture in our region. Together, we can transform the Americas into a model for productive and regenerative food systems—one that nourishes people, protects our planet, and drives economic growth.

I invite you to explore these insights, take action, and join us in shaping the future of food in the Americas – and the world.

By Paula Santilli, CEO, PepsiCo Latin America Foods

The Americas as a Hub for Sustainable Food Production

The agriculture value chain remains vital to many economies, significantly boosting GDP in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)[1] region (World Bank, 2024). Agriculture, in all these countries, embodies more than just economic activity. It represents cultural heritage, environmental stewardship, and economic opportunity, making it a vital component of the region's identity and growth trajectory. The sector's contribution to the GDP across these diverse nations highlights agriculture's essential role in shaping resilient and growth-oriented economies.

The Americas have the potential to lead in sustainably sourced food production and regenerative agriculture, solidifying their position as the world's "food basket." Long recognized for their agricultural strength, the region benefits from vast arable land, diverse ecosystems, and favorable climates for a wide range of crops. With these abundant resources, it remains a key player in global agriculture, particularly as a top exporter of commodities such as soybeans, coffee, sugar, and beef[2]. (OECD-FAO report 2024).

Exports are crucial to the region's agricultural growth, reducing macroeconomic vulnerabilities. By 2033, net exporters of agricultural commodities, such as Latin America and North America, are expected to increase their surplus volumes along with their production, while regions with significant population growth, such as the Near East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, are projected to see their net imports grow proportionately to their growing consumption. (OECD/FAO, 2024). Although the Americas is the world's largest net exporter of agricultural products, several countries and subregions—such as Panama, El Salvador, and much of the Caribbean—remain net importers, and intra-regional trade remains limited.

This vision is not only about increasing output but also about ensuring that agricultural practices contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation while strengthening the resilience of agricultural supply chains. Integrating sustainable agroforestry and regenerative agriculture practices offers significant benefits for restoring degraded lands, sequestering carbon, and improving crop yields and farmer livelihoods. Techniques such as mulching, cover cropping, and reduced tillage enhance soil organic matter, stimulate microbial activity, and improve soil structure, which collectively restore soil fertility and prevent erosion. These practices are particularly impactful in regions like the Cerrado in Brazil or the Chaco in Argentina, where monoculture crops and livestock have led to land degradation. Additionally, incorporating deep-

[1] In 2023, agriculture, forestry, and fishing contributed 6.51% to the GDP of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In comparison, the most recent data shows that these sectors accounted for 0.94% of GDP in the United States (2021) and 1.84% in Canada (2020).

[2] Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is a key player in global agriculture. Between 2021 and 2023, the region contributed 13% of the net value of global agriculture and fish production, with an even larger share in total exports, reaching 18%. North America also plays a significant role, accounting for 10% of global agricultural output and 12% of global trade

rooted trees and diversified vegetation enhances water retention by improving infiltration and reducing surface runoff. This approach addresses water scarcity and boosts resilience to droughts, especially in areas prone to desertification or erratic rainfall, such as parts of Chile and Mexico.

In this regard, a truly regenerative agriculture approach must integrate the Water-Energy-Food (WEF) nexus, recognizing the interdependence between food production, water management, and energy security. In Latin America and the Caribbean, optimizing resource use through precision irrigation, agrovoltaics, and bioenergy is essential for sustainability. Aligning trade policies with these principles can enhance climate resilience, reduce vulnerabilities, and drive sustainable economic growth.

Achieving this vision demands strong regional cooperation. Countries across the Americas must work on the harmonization and convergence of agricultural policies, foster the exchange of best practices, and actively collaborate to develop resilient food systems that can adapt to climate change and withstand market volatility. As export-led growth continues over the coming decade, competitiveness will hinge on trade openness, efficient input use, effective climate strategies, and a deeper commitment to environmental sustainability (FAO, 2023).

The Americas' vertical orientation creates diverse climates and agricultural conditions, limiting the transferability of farming technologies and practices across regions. Unlike Eurasia's horizontal stretch, which allows for greater uniformity, localized adaptation is essential in the Americas. Tailored innovation, climate-smart policies, and data-driven strategies are crucial for fostering resilient and sustainable agrifood systems.

This vision also requires all actors to acknowledge that farmers are the foundation of the food and agriculture value chain, playing a crucial role in ensuring food security and sustainability. It is essential to support them not just as laborers but as businesses, providing them with the necessary resources, training, and financial backing to thrive. Overburdening farmers with excessive regulations and demands can hinder their productivity and well-being, ultimately affecting the entire agricultural ecosystem. Therefore, a balanced approach that recognizes their fundamental importance, supports their business needs, and avoids imposing undue burdens is critical for a resilient and prosperous agricultural sector.

On the other hand, food security remains a critical issue that cannot be underestimated. This is particularly important in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), where significant progress was made in reducing undernourishment and food insecurity between 2005 and 2015, with notable declines in rates and numbers. However, this positive trend reversed after 2015, as both measures increased across most subregions. While the region has experienced slight improvements from the 2020-2021 peak, food insecurity continues to be a pressing concern. These trends underscore the urgent need for targeted strategies to enhance food security resilience across the region (FAO, 2024).

Paradigm Shift in Food Systems

The global dialogue on regenerative agriculture is evolving to encompass much more than agriculture alone—it's about fostering productivity sustainably to meet the needs of growing populations while actively mitigating and adapting to climate change. This approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of agriculture, water, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems. The holistic solutions emerging today recognize that improving one area cannot come at the expense of another; instead, integrated strategies are needed to build resilience across all domains.

While agriculture has historically contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and biodiversity loss, it also has substantial potential for climate mitigation and adaptation when managed sustainably (Dumas, Wirsenius, Searchinger, Andrieu, & Vogt-Schilb, 2022). Embracing practices like climate-smart agriculture, no-till farming, agroforestry, and regenerative agriculture, alongside innovations such as precision agriculture, drones, AI and satellites, reflects a paradigm shift toward sustainable farming that enhances efficiency, optimizes resource use, and reduces environmental harm.

Furthermore, sustainability and productivity in agriculture are complementary goals that can be achieved through responsible growth, focusing on resource efficiency, waste reduction, and equitable development. Precision agriculture and integrated farming systems enhance resource use, biodiversity, and soil health while diversifying farmer incomes. Empowering smallholder farmers with access to education, technology, financial incentives, and active participation in decision-making is essential. Strengthened extension services and accessible financing can enable farmers to adopt climate-smart practices, advance food security, protect ecosystems, and reduce agriculture's environmental impact, ensuring a resilient and sustainable food system for the future (WEF, 2024).

From the Summit of the Americas to Now: Progress and Challenges

The Summit of the Americas has long been a multistakeholder platform for discussing and promoting sustainable development in the region. For the IX Summit of the Americas in 2022, the Americas Business Dialogue (ADB) put forward three recommendations to advance agriculture in the region (Americas Business Dialogue, 2022):

- Encourage promotion of regional regulatory convergence, harmonization, or mutual recognition of regulations, as well as import, export, and transit standards. This aims to minimize regulatory misalignment and disruptions to hemispheric and global supply chains while reducing trading costs.
- Foster the digital transformation of agriculture and food systems and retain young talent in rural areas by enhancing resource efficiency, simplifying business processes, lowering operational costs, and providing training in digital skills.
- Champion climate-smart solutions and regenerative agriculture practices to build resilient and sustainable agribusinesses, protect soils, and address climate change.

The Americas have shown notable progress in advancing digital integration and climate-smart agricultural practices, with initiatives like ePhyto leading the way. The ePhyto system, replacing paper-based phytosanitary certificates with electronic versions, is pivotal in facilitating standardized and interoperable trade processes. This digital transition has improved communication among phytosanitary authorities and trade stakeholders, accelerated customs clearance for perishable items, and reduced instances of fraud. Notably, the system's integration varies by country; while Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and the U.S. have fully implemented ePhyto, others like Paraguay and Peru are in testing phases, and Uruguay has yet to join. Addressing these disparities requires enhanced technological infrastructure, uniform regulatory frameworks, and regional cooperation to ensure continued widespread adoption[3].

Parallel to ePhyto, Latin America has also seen progress in digitalizing origin certificates. ALADI's Digital Certification of Origin (COD)[4], carries the same legal validity as traditional paper certificates, streamlining foreign trade processes by minimizing costs, risks, and delays. This electronic system, which permits virtual processing of certificates, reflects efforts to modernize and harmonize customs procedures. Countries like Argentina and Brazil have fully operational

[3] Although the ePhyto initiative has been in development since 2011, it has experienced significant growth in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
[4] It started in 2011 but gaining great momentum after the COVID19 pandemic.

digital certificates with multiple trading partners, while others such as Bolivia and Panama are still in the early stages of implementation. The gradual adoption of COD underscores the need for ongoing technological and institutional investments.

Beyond trade mechanisms, the region is also prioritizing digital training and technical assistance to bolster agricultural productivity. The UN's ECLAC notes the growing presence of EdTech companies as a marker of technological advancement in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), where the number of such companies has surged, particularly since the early 2010s. Although not exclusively focused on agriculture, the rise in digital education reflects a broader trend towards adoption of technology, which could be further leveraged to support farmers with tools like e-commerce and modern agricultural practices.

Efforts to bridge the digital divide in rural areas have gained momentum – with ECLAC reporting rural internet connectivity improving from 1.2% in 2001 to 25% recently – but challenges persist. Rural areas lag significantly behind urban areas, highlighting the need for targeted investments in digital infrastructure to enable equitable access to internet services and support rural economic growth.

Stakeholders are also increasingly adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, including sustainable livestock management and no-till farming. These practices contribute to productivity, resource conservation, and rural resilience. For instance, no-till farming aids in water conservation, while sustainable livestock management reduces methane emissions. These examples demonstrate that agriculture can balance productivity and environmental goals, given adequate policy support, investment, and collaborative strategies (IICA, 2022).

Together, these initiatives underscore the region's commitment to integrating digital and sustainable practices to strengthen agrifood systems and enhance food security.

Current Landscape: Barriers to Achieving the Vision for Food & Agriculture in the Americas

Achieving the Vision for Food & Agriculture in the Americas requires addressing a range of systemic and emerging challenges that are critical to the sector's future. **Below are some of the key barriers that need to be overcome to ensure sustainable progress.**

1. Aging Population of Farmers as Younger Generations Move Away

The agricultural workforce in many regions across the Americas is aging, with fewer young people willing to engage in farming[5]. This trend reduces the potential for innovation and modernization in agriculture. Older generations often have deep-rooted experience with traditional farming methods and may be more cautious in adopting new technologies, which can present challenges in advancing sustainability goals. The lack of younger people entering the field also means there are fewer opportunities for long-term succession planning in rural enterprises (CEPAL, 2022).

Closely related to the aging population challenge, younger generations are increasingly moving away from agriculture, drawn to urban areas due to the perception that farming lacks profitability and innovation. This rural-to-urban migration exacerbates the labor shortage in agricultural communities and impedes the transfer of knowledge and innovative practices. To reverse this trend, agriculture must be rebranded as a modern, tech-driven, and sustainable industry. Targeted initiatives that engage youth in agri-tech, climate-smart agriculture, and rural entrepreneurship are essential to closing this gap and ensuring the future of the sector (Borda, Sárvári, & Máté Balogh, 2023).

2. Lack of Sufficient Workforce Due to Regular and Irregular Migration

The agriculture sector in several countries, particularly in the U.S., faces labor shortages due to both regular and irregular migration (Davis, J.C., et al., 2024). Stricter immigration policies and fluctuating migration patterns reduce the availability of a seasonal workforce essential for planting, harvesting, and processing crops. This challenge is further compounded by rural-to-urban migration trends, which drain labor from farming communities. Addressing this requires comprehensive immigration reforms and workforce development programs that ensure a stable and skilled labor force (Busso, Carrillo Maldonado, & Chauvin, 2024).

[5] For instance, the rural population of the US skews toward younger (under 15) and older (65+) age groups, with the 65+ cohort growing rapidly due to the aging baby boomer generation. Over the past decade, this trend has contributed to an increase in "older age counties" (20% or more of residents aged 65+), disproportionately affecting rural areas, which already have older populations compared to urban counties. (USDA, 2024))

3. Lack of Innovative Financing to Scale Solutions

Access to financial resources is a significant barrier to scaling up agricultural solutions, especially in smallholder farming communities. While the adoption of practices that improve soil health and water quality is expected to lead to an increase in farm profitability in the medium-term via higher yields and/or savings from reduced use of inputs, in the short-term farmers must often endure reductions in cash flow and profitability due to upfront capital expenditures, growth of certain cost lines, and/or temporary declines in yields as soils adjust to new practices and farmers adjust to the learning curve. (B20 Sustainable Food Systems & Agriculture 2024). Yet, traditional financing mechanisms often do not address the unique needs of farmers, who face challenges such as irregular incomes, long production cycles, and climate risks. There is a need for innovative financing tools such as blended finance, green bonds, and public-private partnerships that can support investments in climate-smart agriculture, digitalization, and infrastructure improvements (Khan, F. U., et al., 2024).

Adopting new farming practices often demands additional inputs, equipment, and technologies. However, during the initial stages of adoption, farm yields and profits may decline before showing improvement. Existing financing systems and models are not adequately equipped to overcome these challenges. Achieving a rapid and large-scale transition in agriculture will require significantly more capital investment. Globally, transforming the food system necessitates an additional $300 billion to $350 billion annually through 2030. Despite offering a societal return exceeding 15 times the investment and the sector's substantial contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, agriculture, forestry, and other land uses received less than 4% of climate finance in 2021 and 2022 (WEF, 2024).

4. Lack of Resources to Educate Farmers[6]

A key obstacle to modernizing agriculture in the Americas is the insufficient availability of education and technical assistance to support farmers' transition to sustainable practices. Many farmers, especially smallholders, lack access to advisory agronomic services, training on best practices, digital tools, and information on implementation of regenerative farming techniques. Furthermore, educational resources often fail to consider local contexts and the specific needs of diverse farming communities (Arias Ortiz, Giambruno, Morduchowicz , & Pineda , 2024). These knowledge gaps stifle productivity and innovation, which limits the potential for scaling sustainable food systems.

[6] An adapted **FábricaDigital Agro** could accelerate agribusiness digital transformation by offering training, mentorship, and technology adoption support. Through a **Virtual Learning Ecosystem (EVA)**, it would provide courses on climate-smart agriculture, financial resilience, and market access, while a mentorship network would connect farmers with experts in digitalization and sustainability. This initiative would bridge knowledge gaps, link rural producers to digital markets and funding, and ensure that even smallholder farmers benefit from digital agriculture solutions.

5. Poor Internet Connectivity[7]

The lack of reliable internet connectivity in rural areas creates a major obstacle to adopting digital agriculture solutions. Farmers cannot access online markets, training resources, or precision agriculture tools without sufficient connectivity. Bridging the digital divide between urban and rural areas is essential to promoting agricultural innovation, particularly in areas like data-driven farming, supply chain transparency, and access to financial services (Dobis, et al., 2022).

6. Lack of Infrastructure (or Deficient Rural Infrastructure)

Inadequate infrastructure, such as poor roads, limited access to markets, and inefficient logistics systems, significantly hampers agricultural productivity and profitability. Without proper transportation networks, farmers face high costs and delays in getting their products to market, resulting in food waste and lower incomes. Investments in rural infrastructure are crucial to improving market access, reducing post-harvest losses, and enhancing overall food system efficiency (Castilleja Vargas, Gutiérrez Juárez, Laura, & Serrudo, 2023).

7. Extreme Weather Events[8]

Agriculture in the Americas is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather events, including more frequent droughts and floods. These phenomena disrupt production cycles, reduce yields, and cause long-term damage to ecosystems. There is an urgent need to scale up climate-resilient practices such as drought-resistant crop varieties, improved water management systems, and disaster preparedness strategies to safeguard food security in the region (Galindo , Hoffman , & Vogt-Schilb , 2022).

8. Water Scarcity and Resource Management

Water scarcity is a growing concern, particularly in regions that depend on irrigation. Inefficient water use, over-extraction of groundwater, and pollution from agricultural runoff all exacerbate water stress. Improved water management practices, including drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and integrated water resource management, are critical for ensuring the

[7] LPWAN technologies like Mioty enable remote farm monitoring without high-bandwidth infrastructure, while frugal solutions such as USSD-based platforms and SMS services provide digital access to rural farmers. Starlink, LEO satellites, and edge computing can further expand connectivity, unlocking digital farming opportunities in remote areas.

[8] AI-powered climate modeling enables hyper-local weather forecasting, helping farmers anticipate extreme events and optimize resource use. Blockchain-based traceability enhances supply chain transparency, ensuring sustainability and food safety compliance. Digital twin technology simulates farming scenarios, allowing producers to test strategies for soil health, irrigation, and crop rotation before implementation.

sustainability of agricultural production in the face of rising water demand and climate variability (Datshkovsky, Perez, Libra, & Collaer, 2022).

For instance, in October 2024, rivers across the Amazon basin plunged to record-low levels as a severe drought gripped vast swaths of South America. Prolonged periods of reduced rainfall exacerbated wildfires, withered crops, disrupted transportation networks, and hindered hydroelectric power generation in Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela (NASA, 2024).

9. Lack of Enabling Policy and Budgetary Support

Insufficient governmental commitment and funding for sustainable agricultural practices, trade facilitation, and food security initiatives often hinder progress across the region. This lack of support affects the implementation of critical programs aimed at improving productivity and addressing climate resilience.

10. Land Tenure Issues

Land ownership and usage rights remain a significant barrier to agricultural development, especially in the LAC region. Insecure land tenure disproportionately impacts smallholder farmers, discouraging long-term investments in sustainable farming practices and limiting access to credit and other resources.

Unlocking Sustainable Food Systems: Seven Key Principles

The urgency of transforming food systems in the Americas stems from interconnected challenges, including climate change, resource scarcity, social inequalities, and economic pressures. The ability to meet these challenges requires a multi-dimensional approach that aligns agricultural practices with innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity – ultimately leading to more productive and resilient food systems, building on a reverse value chain that takes into account the consumers' new needs and preferences allowing for more competitiveness. This document serves as a guide for policymakers and stakeholders, offering a framework to advance these goals through seven foundational principles.

These principles represent actionable pathways for promoting innovation, enhancing productivity, ensuring environmental conservation, and fostering inclusivity across the food and agriculture value chain. Each principle is supported by policy recommendations to inspire collaboration and implementation at local, national, and regional levels.

Below, **we outline the seven key principles for fostering sustainable food systems**, providing the tools and strategies to address today's pressing challenges while building a more resilient and equitable future.

It is important to note at the outset that governments and the private sector must adopt a collaborative approach to working with farmers by enacting these principles, prioritizing listening, inclusivity, and tailored support. By actively engaging farmers and understanding their unique perspectives and challenges, stakeholders can develop strategies that are both effective and relevant. Inclusivity ensures that all farmers, regardless of their size or location, have access to the necessary resources and support. Providing a range of supportive options that meet farmers where they are—whether through education, technology, or financial assistance—empowers them to contribute to climate goals while maintaining their livelihoods. This holistic approach not only enhances the resilience of the agricultural sector but also fosters a more sustainable and equitable future.

1. Digitalization and Innovation

Digital technologies and innovation are transforming agriculture and food systems by enhancing productivity, efficiency, and sustainability (OECD, 2024). From precision agriculture to smart farming, digital tools that enable farmers to optimize input use, monitor crop health, and predict weather patterns—ultimately increasing yields while reducing environmental impact.

Digitalization involves the integration of technologies such as IoT (Internet of Things), AI (Artificial Intelligence), and data analytics into farming practices. Precision agriculture, for instance, allows for the targeted application of water, fertilizers, and pesticides, reducing waste and improving crop health. Additionally, mobile applications and platforms facilitate real-time market information, enabling farmers to make informed decisions and access broader markets.

For example, creating an Agrifood Data Space in the Americas—modeled after the European Data Spaces initiative—could establish a trusted, interoperable, and sovereign data-sharing infrastructure for the agrifood ecosystem. By integrating public and private data sources, it would enhance decision-making, optimize resource use, and support traceability, sustainability, and cross-border trade. This initiative could drive investment, innovation, and regulatory alignment, positioning the region as a global leader in digital agriculture.

Critically, the types of technologies and platforms needed to make the transition to regenerative agriculture must be tailored to the region and be appropriate for the size and scale of farmers – including smallholders.

Policies to increase access to and adoption of digitalization include:

- Invest in digital infrastructure in rural areas, such as broadband internet, to ensure widespread access to digital tools.
- Funding public infrastructure projects to bridge the connectivity gap between rural and urban areas.
- Implement national strategies for digital agriculture that include training programs for farmers on new technologies.
- Foster public-private partnerships to promote the development and deployment of digital agricultural solutions.
- Establish AgTech incubators to foster the creation of tools and applications tailored to the unique needs, challenges, and characteristics of the region's production systems.
- Support increased extension services and access to trained agronomists – including via partnership with industry associations – to support farmers in adopting technologies and innovations.
- Encourage the adoption of modern agricultural mechanization practices.
- Develop continuous education programs and effective knowledge-sharing mechanisms to equip farmers with innovative agricultural techniques and advanced technologies for improved productivity and sustainability.
- Conduct research on innovative seed varieties, facilitate the adoption of best practices, and enhance oversight of entities involved in producing and distributing unauthorized inputs and seeds.
- Forge strategic connections between the agriculture industry and technology entrepreneurs in Foodtech and Agrotech.

2. Financing Mechanisms

Access to finance is a critical enabler for adopting sustainable practices in agriculture (WEF, 2023). However, as noted above, many farmers face challenges such as affordability, risk and uncertainty of when economic returns will be obtained, and lack of financial products that adhere to the unique cycle of farming.

Innovative financing mechanisms, such as green bonds, blended finance, and microloans, can bridge this gap. Green bonds, for example, are used to fund projects that have positive environmental benefits, including sustainable agriculture. Blended finance combines public and private investment to reduce the risks for private investors, making sustainable projects more attractive.

To create the right financing mechanisms that enable farmers to scale regenerative practices, collaboration among public authorities, companies in the food value chain, financial institutions and multilateral organizations is essential (B20 Sustainable Food Systems & Agriculture 2024).

Key policies to implement include:

- Establish public-private financing programs that provide low-interest loans or grants, with a particular focus on supporting small-scale farmers.
- Facilitate access to private capital by de-risking investments in agriculture through guarantees and insurance.
- Create financial instruments like climate resilience bonds that specifically target sustainable agriculture.
- Establish regulatory frameworks for the development of carbon markets.
- Harmonize financial taxonomies for green finance to improve access to funding across all segments of the agricultural value chain.
- Establish insurance programs for smallholder farmers to guarantee their respective crops and revenue.

3. Sustainable Water Use

Agriculture is the largest consumer of freshwater globally, accounting for approximately 70% of all water withdrawals (Fujs & Kashiwase, 2023). With climate change exacerbating water scarcity, the need for sustainable water management in agriculture has never been more urgent.

Sustainable water use involves adopting practices that optimize water efficiency, such as drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and the use of drought-resistant crop varieties. Additionally, integrated water resources management approaches ensure that water use in agriculture is balanced with the needs of other sectors and ecosystems (World Water Council, 2023).

Key policies to implement include:

- Promote water-efficient technologies, such as drip irrigation and soil moisture sensors, through subsidies or technical support.
- Invest in sustainable water infrastructure, such as reservoirs, rainwater harvesting systems, and efficient irrigation networks, to enhance water storage, distribution, and use in agriculture, particularly in areas vulnerable to water scarcity.
- Implement regulatory frameworks for water use in agriculture that balance the needs of farmers, industry, and ecosystems.
- Foster inclusive dialogues with all stakeholders, particularly those in the private sector.
- Develop public awareness campaigns and capacity-building programs on sustainable water management practices.
- Promote and advance biotechnology to develop crops resistant to water stress and efficient in water use.
- Enhance oversight of entities involved in producing and distributing unauthorized inputs and seeds.

4. Transportation and Food Storage

Efficient transportation and storage systems are essential for reducing food loss and waste, which currently account for about one-third of all food produced globally (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). Improving these systems can enhance food security and reduce the environmental impact of food systems.

Investments in modernized infrastructure, cold chain logistics, and innovative storage solutions can minimize post-harvest losses and ensure that food reaches markets in optimal condition. Additionally, reducing the carbon footprint of transportation through the use of electric vehicles and optimizing supply chains is crucial for sustainability.

Key policies to implement include:

- Invest in transportation and storage infrastructure, such as cold chains and warehousing facilities, to reduce post-harvest losses.
- Focus on modernizing ports and logistics hubs to boost competitiveness while minimizing costs and transit times.
- Promote the development of rural road networks to improve market access for farmers.
- Prioritize measurement and monitoring of food loss and waste as a fundamental step to guide the development and implementation of effective reduction strategies.
- Encourage the adoption of sustainable practices in food logistics, such as using eco-friendly packaging and reducing carbon emissions in transport.
- Implement GPS-enabled temperature monitoring and IoT devices for real-time tracking of perishables to ensure consistent temperature control during the supply chain journey.
- Promote biotech crops with the capacity of resisting transportation and market conditions.

5. Food Processing

Food processing has long been an essential factor in ensuring safe, sustainable, and accessible food systems for the entire population. Its contribution is especially relevant in contexts of inequality and vulnerability, by facilitating access to a wide variety of foods, regardless of geographic or climatic factors, and ensuring their safety. It is essential that public policies in Latin America be supported by solid and internationally recognized scientific evidence.[9]

Organizations such as the FAO have established four strategic priorities for Latin America and the Caribbean: (1) promoting more efficient, inclusive, and sustainable production; (2) improving nutrition; (3) sustainably managing natural resources; and (4) reducing inequalities. These priorities reflect the urgent need to transform agri-food systems, recognizing the key role of food processing in strengthening food and nutrition security. Therefore, it is imperative that the region's public policies recognize and support food processing as a strategic tool. This entails effectively integrating scientific evidence, strengthening knowledge management, and fostering inter-institutional collaboration to design and implement educational and regulatory strategies commensurate with the complexity of current challenges.

Policymakers in Latin America have a pivotal role to play in leveraging food processing as a strategic tool for food security, rural development, and nutritional resilience. While current public discourse often focuses on perceived negative health impacts of so-called “ultra-processed foods,” there is currently no evidence of a causal link between level of processing and health outcomes. Centuries of innovation in food processing have enhanced shelf life, reduced post-harvest losses, and enabled food fortification. By shifting the policy focus from restriction to innovation and resilience, Latin American countries can build stronger food systems that align with public health goals and economic inclusion.

Key policies to implement include:

- Integrated policies that promote investment in food processing infrastructure, particularly for small and medium agribusinesses, while also supporting innovation in healthy, nutrient dense foods.
- Initiatives such as fiscal incentives, technical support, and public-private partnerships can enhance value chains and increase rural employment.

[9] As the FAO emphasizes, eradicating hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition requires a shared understanding of their causes as well as informed decision-making based on reliable data and statistics. FAO. (2023). El estado de la seguridad alimentaria y la nutrición en el mundo 2023. Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura. Recuperado de https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/62edbe6e-fcb9-477d-8a88-e35613dbf4db/content:contentReference[oaicite:9]{index=9}

- Food labeling laws and nutrition education rooted in science that is designed to guide consumers toward informed, balanced choices (rather than stigmatizing processing as a whole).

6. Trade Facilitation

Trade plays a vital role in ensuring global food security by allowing countries to access food products that are not locally available or affordable. However, trade barriers, such as tariffs and non-tariff measures, can disrupt food supply chains and increase food costs (Illescas, Regúnaga, & Tejeda Rodriguez, 2021).

Trade facilitation involves simplifying and harmonizing trade procedures to reduce the time and cost associated with moving goods across borders. This includes improving customs processes, enhancing logistics infrastructure, and promoting regional trade agreements that reduce barriers.

Key policies to implement include:

- Simplify export and import procedures through digital platforms and single-window systems.
- Harmonize standards and certifications for agricultural products to facilitate cross-border trade.
- Establish local agribusiness committees to strengthen industry collaboration.
- Foster digital trade among countries in the region to enhance cross-border commerce and economic integration.
- Engage in regional trade agreements that prioritize agricultural trade liberalization.
- Design comprehensive frameworks to streamline and support agribusiness operations, with a focus on enhancing traceability and improving access to digital information.
- Implement initiatives such as the Single Window for Foreign Trade, Digital Certification of Origin, and electronic phytosanitary certification (e-Phyto) to streamline procedures and minimize the time and costs associated with foreign trade.

7. Inclusive Transition

The transition to sustainable food systems must be inclusive, ensuring that all stakeholders, particularly smallholder farmers, women, and marginalized communities, are empowered to participate and benefit from the changes.

An inclusive transition requires policies and programs that address social inequalities, provide equitable access to resources, and ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard in decision-making processes. Capacity-building initiatives, gender-sensitive programs, and social protection measures are essential components of an inclusive approach.

Key policies to implement include:

- Develop policies that support the empowerment of women and youth in agriculture through targeted training and capacity-building initiatives.
- Ensure that agricultural policies and programs are inclusive and consider the needs of marginalized communities.
- Promote the inclusion of smallholder farmers in value chains through cooperatives and market access initiatives.
- Facilitate access to financial services and credit for smallholder farmers, women, and marginalized communities by developing inclusive financing mechanisms, such as microloans, grants, insurance and low-interest credit programs.
- Strengthen land tenure rights and access to land for vulnerable groups, ensuring secure land ownership and use rights.
- Implement targeted support mechanisms to boost sector competitiveness.
- Revise technical regulations and align them with international standards.
- Promote diversified production systems that enable producers to earn multiple income streams throughout the year
- Engage in strategic food diplomacy initiatives to secure access to key markets.

Conclusion

The Americas possess a unique opportunity to position the region as a global leader in sustainable food production. However, accomplishing this vision requires coordinated action. Strengthening the region's agricultural capacity demands closer collaboration among governments, the private sector, and multilateral organizations to foster a technology-driven, climate-resilient food and agriculture sector.

In this context, accelerating digital transformation across rural areas must be a priority. Public investment in broadband connectivity, data infrastructure, and precision agriculture technologies are essential to equip producers with the tools needed to access markets, optimize resource management, and adapt to climate variability. The development of a regional Agrifood Data Space and the expansion of digital training initiatives would empower farmers with real-time information, enhance transparency, and improve regional market access.

Addressing water scarcity and modernizing logistics infrastructure are equally critical. Promoting efficient irrigation techniques, strengthening cold chain systems, and improving transportation networks are necessary measures to safeguard food production, reduce post-harvest losses, and mitigate the sector's vulnerability to extreme weather events in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Trade facilitation must also be prioritized to reduce barriers and foster competitiveness. Expanding the adoption of digital certification systems and harmonizing agricultural standards would streamline cross-border trade, lower transaction costs, increase transparency, and promote greater regional integration.

Moreover, our policy recommendations highlight the relevance of designing agricultural policies that actively promote youth engagement. Strengthening land tenure security is also essential to revitalize rural areas and ensure the long-term viability of farming as a profession.

As the region prepares for the X Summit of the Americas, a coordinated, action-oriented agenda anchored in these strategic priorities will be essential. Embracing innovation, sustainability, and regional cooperation will be vital for the Americas to build resilient food systems capable of meeting future challenges.

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