**The role of responsible investments in agriculture**

**for the transition towards more sustainable food systems**

Monday 7 December

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Good morning everyone and welcome again to our event: it is a great pleasure to be here with you and have the opportunity to discuss the role of responsible investments in agriculture **(RAI)**. Let me thank Carin, our moderator, and all the colleagues and participants for the interest shown into the topic.

As you know, the agri-food sector is facing many challenges and sustainable investments should be at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery to increase resilience, generate jobs, empower women and young producers, addressing in general rural poverty.

This is why, the European Parliamentary Alliance against Hunger and Malnutrition has indicated sustainable value chains and responsible investments as a priority of our work.

However, in order to generate benefits for all, it is essential to ensure not only MORE, but BETTER investments, striking an ambitious balance between the three dimensions of sustainability: social, economic and environmental.

These objectives were at the basis of the agreement reached last month between the European Parliament and the Council on the agricultural part the European Recovery Instrument. We are talking of more than 8 billion EUR allocated to the benefit of European rural communities. We wanted that these funds will be really instrumental to the recovery of the rural areas and of the agri-food sector, in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal, and not finance “business-as-usual” measures. For this purpose, we decided that at least 55% shall be allocated to support cooperation measures, young and small farmers, and especially for investments that promote the social and economic development of rural areas, pursuing the following objectives:

* short supply chains and local markets;
* better resource efficiency, including precision and smart farming, innovation, digitalisation and modernisation of production machinery and equipment;
* better safety conditions at work;
* renewable energy, circular and bio-economy;
* access to high-quality information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas.

This push towards innovation must have a fully democratic nature, giving every farmer the opportunity to benefit from it, irrespective of size and educational background.

Now, the real challenge is to replicate this approach also outside the European borders. In order to achieve this objective, a strong public-private partnership - leaded at global level by FAO - is not only needed but also decisive. This is why I very much appreciate the launch of this practical handbook, which can steer the work of our Alliance in the coming months and years, and expand the scope of our interventions to promote and enhance sustainable investments also to third countries.

Thanks again to all of you and I look forward to continue our fruitful discussion.