HLPF 2021 Online High-level Side Event on "Leveraging Science, Technology and Innovation to Build More Resilient Food Systems: the Case of the Juncao Technology"

Opening remarks by Alexander Trepelkov
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Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), I am pleased to welcome you to this online event on "Leveraging Science, Technology and Innovation to Build More Resilient Food Systems: the Case of the Juncao Technology."

We are meeting at a critical moment. The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed development gains of the past decades and has set back the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development everywhere.

The combined health, social and economic impact of the pandemic has outpaced any other crisis in recent history. The pandemic has also undermined the food security of millions of people around the world, hitting the poorest and most vulnerable the hardest.

In the face of these unprecedented challenges, science, technology and innovation (STI) must be at the center of COVID-19 recovery efforts that would move us closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

There is a need for a long-term, multi-sectoral and bold response and recovery plan that would include the transfer of appropriate technologies such as the Juncao technology to support the most vulnerable and affected countries and people, leaving no one behind.

Our recovery efforts should aim at re-building a more sustainable, resilient and equitable economy and society that would prioritize investments in areas such as food systems, climate change mitigation, social protection, and tackling inequalities between and within countries.

Even before the pandemic, such initiatives were put forward. The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, written by a group of independent scientists, stressed that we were off track in addressing critical areas like climate change, biodiversity loss and inequalities.

The scientists identified entry points for transformation, including food systems and nutrition patterns, where interlinkages among the SDGs are especially strong and where actions can harness synergies to accelerate progress with due regard to specific contexts.

They urged for the need to utilize new technologies to manage trade-offs among goals, but they also warned that successful application of technologies required coordinated efforts with other levers of change like governance, business and finance and individual and collective action.

The UN Food Systems Summit, coming up in the fall, aims to further advance thinking and action to transform food systems and tap into synergies among the SDGs while also motivating coordinated action.

National dialogues are taking place around the world in the lead up to the Summit to encourage new partnerships and share knowledge about promising initiatives and technologies such as the Juncao technology. Right now, there is a global audience eager to learn more about technologies that can be applied in food systems to generate synergies – ending poverty and hunger, supporting climate action and gender equality, and protecting ecosystems.

The Multi-stakeholder Forum on STI for the SDGs, held last May, confirmed that progress towards sustainable, resilient and equitable recovery would depend on scaling up and sharing effective technologies for food production, especially for small-scale farmers.

Our discussions today provide a timely opportunity for an exchange of national experiences on how initiatives and partnerships linked to STI can contribute to the achievement of the SDGs through synergies, while facilitating knowledge transfer and offering space for networking.

Distinguishe participants,

The Juncao technology brings multiple benefits to SDG implementation at lage, in more than 100 countries across the world. From China's Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the Yellow River Basin, to the upstream riverbanks of the Nile River and the South African Plateau, the Juncao grass has been used to combat land degradation and desertification, conserve water, and restore and maintain soil fertility.

In the process, Juncao grass has been used for mushroom production, animal feed, and biomass fuel, contributing to progress in achieving various SDGs, particularly the eradication of poverty and hunger, the empowerment of women, environmental protection and sustainable energy.

By supporting mushroom cultivation, this technology is boosting food security and nutrition and the transition to a green economy through environmentally friendly technology, more sustainable agriculture, and green jobs.

The economic benefits from Juncao technology are likewise remarkable. Country experiences show that farmers who have learned to plant Juncao grass have successfully expanded livestock production, have grown nutritious mushroom for meeting demands of local and regional markets, and have created jobs and income streams.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Juncao Project which was launched in 2017 with generous support from the People’s Republic of China, underscores the importance of technology transfer through South-South, North-South, and triangular cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The first phase of the Project was implemented between May 2017 and June 2021. The second phase will run from July 2021 to June 2024 and cover more countries globally. Together with Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University (FAFU), we will organize online training courses, workshops and study tours, to promote the transfer and application of the Juncao technology.

We also hope to provide small research grants to local experts in the project countries, strengthening national institutional capacity to conduct research on localizing the Juncao technology and offer extension services to the farmers.

Dear colleagues,

We need agri-food systems that are more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. UNDESA stands ready to collaborate with all stakeholders to enhance knowledge sharing and strengthen national capacities of developing countries for sustainable production, income generation, and entrepreneurship by using the Juncao technology.

I look forward to a fruitful discussion.

Thank you.