

10th October 2025

Malta Food Agency

**Good governance, fairness and accountability
in the food systems of Malta from the perspective of the Malta Parliamentary Ombudsman**

Hon. Mr Speaker

Hon. Minister

Hon. Parliamentary Secretary

Hon. Members of the House of Representatives

Distinguished guests

Good morning

I am really happy to be here with you this morning.

I address you as the Parliamentary Ombudsman of Malta — an independent constitutional institution — whose mandate includes the investigation and oversight of the administrative conduct with transparency and good governance of Government and its agencies where the country's food supply sector is concerned.

I have the obligation to speak clearly and make recommendations wherever necessary fairly as the public interest requires.

The Malta Food Agency was established in 2021. Among the functions listed in its Constitutive Order, the Agency has the duty to implement Government policy in the area of agriculture and fisheries. I am in a position to state that the Agency is fulfilling its administrative functions well. Since the Agency was established, no complaint was submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman against the Agency. My recent official visit to the Agency, during which I had the opportunity to meet officials and employees, was both instructive and informative within the framework of a free exchange of ideas and views.

Within the same Ministry, the Agricultural Resources Malta Agency was entrusted with the implementation of Legal Notice 150 of 2025 on the registration of agricultural land. My appeal to the Agency is to perform the delicate and sensitive functions that were assigned to it with care, caution and respect of the rights of all interested parties.

This year, the Food Safety and Security Authority by virtue of Act XV of 2025, with a mandate to strengthen oversight of the entire food supply chain. It is positive development in that there

should be one transparent regulator. Fragmentation of responsibilities among multiple entities within the same field brings about legal uncertainty in the application of the law.

The Government has launched the National Strategy for Resilient Food Systems 2025–2034, aimed at enhancing food security and sustainability in line with the European Union's *Farm to Fork* vision. This is the right path forward. My hope is that the public authorities concerned do not limit themselves to strategy but would devise doable implementation programmes in the interest of the country because that is what our country deserves.

I wish to share with you my view on a matter of great importance : the protection of food as a source of life.

When food is plenty, the risk of waste increases without control. This should never be the case because it is not acceptable at all levels, especially when one considers the despair that food shortages cause including in places close to us.

It is not right for a country to accept as a necessary evil a culture that tolerates food waste, for whatever reason.

Much needs to be done for the culture of waste to be discarded and transformed into responsible behaviour that truly respects what hunger and famine mean for millions of persons worldwide, especially those who are forgotten, derelict or who do not make the headlines.

We must consider as of paramount importance the fact that food is not a mere commodity, but the foundation of our wellbeing. The common good requires that agricultural production be strengthened and given support, that fishing is allowed to remain sustainable, and that food consumption is regulated in a manner that all who waste food are held accountable even financially.

Global disruptions caused by the pandemic (and its shockwaves) and regional wars have highlighted the vulnerability of Malta's food supply. This is why the principles of good governance, fairness, and accountability in our food systems are so critical. Responsible leadership in the management of the food supply is vital.

To achieve a fair food system, special attention must be given to the following areas :

Sustainable agricultural production

Today our country has limited agricultural land and high operating costs, especially due to the scarcity of water resources — all factors that keep investment back. Therefore the new generation of farmers should be given opportunities, including financial incentives, to use

innovative and sustainable methods of producing the fruit of the land in a viable and competitive way without having to carry an unbearable burden.

Food safety and quality

Consumers have the right to good and safe food, which means strict standards and immediate responses to any risks.

Fair markets and distribution

Justice must also prevail in the market, with systems of transparency and traceability in place.

In conclusion

Good and responsible leadership are not mere words. They are the foundations of a food system that does not discourage any player who has a vision.

The Office of the Ombudsman is committed to promoting and safeguarding justice, keeping its eyes wide open when it comes to the accountability and transparency of public entities and their officials by making recommendations, where appropriate, seeking and finding remedies.

Poor administration of public affairs should never be allowed as it causes harm and brings about a culture of indifference that is unworthy of this country.

Thank you.