

## JEAN-MICHEL SEVERINO

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Good morning, everyone. My job here this morning is to facilitate this panel and help our colleagues to make the best of our time. It is really a great pleasure to be here again for the third time in a row for this agricultural session and I want to thank the organizers, Thierry, Mrs. Kwon, etc., for insisting on having this theme.

We have a wonderful panel to address these very important issues. For those of you who attended this session last year, many things have happened since then, prices have gone in all directions but mostly up, and to a certain extent we have swallowed the consequences of the Ukraine-Russia war. We have also witnessed what we thought would take place, extreme weather events, droughts, floods, etc., that have continued to disrupt not only the economics of food, production and consumption but also how people live. However, the major structural issues such as inequality, hunger, poverty and access to food have not changed that much and I think our panelists will insist on that. This is all linked to a kind of resurgence of agricultural issues at the heart of our geopolitical debates, such as the Mercosur debate, which has shown how sensitive those issues are, also in industrialized countries.

Nevertheless, I find it striking and that is a question for us, that those agricultural issues have remained very low on our debating agenda. We have had three very important multilateral discussions this semester: COP 29 on climate, COP 16 on biodiversity and the negotiation of the new Plastics Treaty. In all those three international negotiations, agricultural issues were basically very low on the agenda, if not. This lack of focus on what is, with health, one of the most critical of our global issues when it comes to the sustainability of our livelihoods, is a big question.

To deal with these immense issues in a short time, we have once more a wonderful panel. Again today, we have with us Maximo Torero Cullen joining from Rome. He is the Chief Economist at the FAO and a former World Bank Executive Director for a large group of Latin American countries, a former head of the division of Market and Trades at IFPRI and has held many other prestigious roles. He will enlighten us on the global approach of the FAO. We also have the pleasure of the presence of Philippe Chalmin, extremely well-known as the founder and leader of Cyclope, a major report on commodity prices, including agriculture of course and a professor emeritus at Dauphine. He has written 40 books, and I recommend the *Journal de la Dissolution* and *The Brief History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, which is quite exciting. We are also honored and privileged to have Bayu Krisnamurthi with us, who was a Vice Minister of Agriculture of Indonesia and is now a professor at Bogor Agricultural University. He is also founder and chairman of Inclusive and Sustainable Agribusiness Initiatives, so he is incredibly

knowledgeable about our issues and not only a regional anchor but has a global vision. The same could be said of Kamel Abdallah, whom we are also happy to have with us as a local anchor of the conference in the region, but also as somebody with an incredible breadth in knowledge around not only global situation. He started his career as an academic, has led several very important businesses in the food industry, and now he leads a major Egyptian sugar and agricultural company, which gives us an hands-on experience of our issues. Finally, Jean-Marc Astorg is the Director of Strategy at CNES, the French space agency. His presence may seem a bit of a surprise as CNES does not appear a an agricultural organization, but Jean-Marc has a very special perspective on our issues that deserves quite a focus, which he will develop, and that shows how disruptive innovation adds to the global landscape and how, which is an issue dear to some of us, introducing links with other disciplines, areas, etc., is critical. Agriculture is not just about agriculture; it is about many other things.