Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to be here and to present Georgian agriculture at the UN ESCAP session.

I am representing the Georgian Farmers’ Association, which is an umbrella association covering the whole country and uniting over 3800 farmers.

In my country, farming is the backbone of sustainable development, but there is no sustainable development without peace. When we talk about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Georgia is a relevant case with all the challenges it faces in the transitional period. Let me give you a brief overview of Georgian agriculture.

Georgia is a small transitional market economy of 3.7 million people with a per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of about $4,000 and an unemployment rate of nearly 12%. About two-thirds of the workforce is self-employed, predominantly as subsistence farmers.

Since 1999, the share of agriculture in total GDP declined from 25% to 9%, as it remains today. After collapse of the Soviet Union, half of Georgian population become peasants - not because they chose to be, but because they had no other choice. However, economic reforms and initiatives by the government, private sector and the donor community since 2012 have started to reinforce Georgia’s agricultural sector.

Nowadays, economic development is the main challenge of Georgia. Poverty reduction remains to be a priority on the country’s agenda. The share of population under the absolute poverty line is declining year by year. Average monthly remuneration of employed in the agriculture sector is increasing; for the last decade, it increased by 32%. As for the export of agricultural commodities - it increased by 40%.

Nevertheless, the field still needs to be improved in order to contribute to the country’s development.

Low productivity has been continuously affecting competitiveness of Georgian agricultural products on the domestic and global markets. To compete on the world market, Georgian producers should concentrate on attaining various food safety and quality standards to comply with the requirements set forth in Association Agreement signed in 2014 between EU and Georgia.

In Georgia, the main challenges of food security are high import dependency, low local production and the lack of physical or economic access to nutritious food, particularly for those living in mountainous regions.

With no food reserves, Georgia was importing more than 70% of its food, making it only 20% self-sufficient on average and even lower rates agri commodities. However Year by Year it is improving According to the Global Hunger Index, Georgia ranks 32\textsuperscript{nd} among 119 countries, pointing at low hunger index, whilst the Gini coefficient stands at 0,39, indicating a medium inequality rate.
Political stability is a pre-condition to economic development of any country. Even with a stable political environment, achieving food security is not possible without the Government’s commitment and clear policies, as well as active participation of the civil society in raising awareness on the issue.

Equal access to finance and education especially in rural areas remains a challenge. Without the use of technology, farmers get less yield per hectare and cannot compete even in local markets. The data of registered farmers does not exist. The land registration process has not been finished, financial institutions see the field as risky and less profitable.

However, with its aspiration to comply with highest standards and continue developing process, Georgia joined other countries of the world in approving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG Council was established under the Georgian Government Administration to monitor the progress, where Georgian Farmers’ Association (GFA) is an active participant. With no historical data and baseline information, it is difficult to judge the progress, but the general dynamic is positive and therefore promising.

I have to mention that Ministries of Environment Protection and Agriculture as well as of Economy and Sustainable Development, are supporting farmers, youth, ethnical minorities and women through different schemes and projects. There is a huge contribution from EU, USAID, Austrian Development Agency, Swiss Development Agency, BP, UNDP, UN Women, FAO, IFAD to support agriculture and follow 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I hope that next time, my country representative standing on this platform, will proudly deliver the progress against the 2030 Agenda indicators.

Thank you.