

Message of DG, FAO on World Food Day 2022



Leave No One Behind

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues and Friends,

World Food Day 2022 is unprecedented in history. We are facing numerous and overlapping challenges from natural and man-made disasters - some recur annually, others are unexpected and unforeseeable. After more than 2 years of a global pandemic, with interruptions to international supply chains, and now with the impacts of the war in Ukraine, we are left with a weak global economy. The most vulnerable have been pushed to the brink of starvation.

The number of people suffering from hunger continues to rise and currently stands at 828 million. About 3.1 billion people globally cannot afford a healthy diet, and the number of acutely food insecure people has risen from 135 million to 193 million. These numbers are the sad confirmation that too many people are being left further behind!

This year's World Food Day is unprecedented because in spite of the daunting circumstances we face, we also have a promising and hopeful perspective! For the first time, we are seeing an increased and strengthened political will on food security from all politicians, societies and key partners – from developed to developing countries, from rich to poor nations, at local, national, regional, and global level. There is political momentum to do more and better – to build back better and stronger, together; to take actions to ensure that no one is left behind. This is unprecedented!

Among the many challenges, we have also seen positive actions that give us hope for an even better World Food Day next year, and in the years to come. We see emergency actions being taken – both in the short and in the long term - to ensure continuous food availability, food accessibility and food affordability through initiatives and crises response task forces, as well as actions to ensure that the supply of food, feed, fertilizers, fuel, and vegetable oil, among others, is kept open and operating smoothly.

I am very much delighted to see the endorsement of a new food shock window after FAO recommended a Food Import Financial Facility (FIFF) to the G20 Presidency in April this year to help vulnerable countries – approximately 62 - cope with food shortages and rising import bills. We are seeing countries taking concrete steps to produce more food locally.

At FAO we have been playing a bigger role in international fora such as the G20, G7 and the UN Security Council Briefings, in particular through Information Notes, the monthly FAO Food Price Index, and AMIS, and others, by providing timely and up-to-date information to enhance food market transparency and policy response for food security through professional assessments and analyses. Since the start of 2022, FAO has produced 9 Information Notes, 8 Food Price Index updates, 9 thematic reports, 8 policy proposals, and held numerous informal consultations with all Members and regional and sub-regional groups, which have been highly appreciated by all. We have provided guidance and technical support to international initiatives and meetings from the G7 to the G20, from UNGA to the African Union, to APEC, to the EU and others.

We have shown the world that FAO is a reliable, neutral, professional service provider for all Members, which has resulted in increased trust and investment in FAO – and which enables us to better support Members. Over the past 10 months FAO Members have endorsed two key thematic strategies, on Science and Innovation, and on Climate Change, to be implemented in synergy and coherently. These are game changers that will spur the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework over the next decade.

The World Food Forum will officially open, with the focus on 3 key areas: Hand-in-Hand Investment; Global Youth in Agriculture; and Science and Innovation. The UN Food System Summit follow-up Coordination Hub, hosted by FAO on behalf of the UN system together with IFAD and WFP, is helping countries implement and take ownership and partnership of national pathways for the transformation of their agrifood systems.

The FAO Action Plan for the coming years includes 20 Priority Programme Areas under the overall guidance of the 4 Betters, such as integrated water management for food security and climate change, soil mapping, promotion of One Country One Priority Product, digital agriculture and food, and the Green Cities initiative, among others. All these prospects make me optimistic that next year we will celebrate World Food Day with a more hopeful scenario. But we need to act now, do more and better! Together! In the face of a looming global food crisis, we need to harness the power of solidarity and collective momentum to build a better future where everyone has regular access to enough nutritious food.

We are almost 8 billion people living today on this small planet, are all inter-connected through our natural resources, the basic needs we share and the complex challenges we face. If we want to make progress, we can only do it together. We need to double our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for everyone, everywhere. The transformation of our agrifood systems is critical if we want to honour our pledge to leave no one behind. Only more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable global agrifood systems can help to solve global interconnected problems, to achieve our common goal of the 4 betters: better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all.

Leaving no one behind means addressing all of these dimensions in a holistic manner, and simultaneously giving our Youth the opportunities they need, unleashing the creativity they possess. The future is in their hands, the planet is their home to stay.

I look forward to joining a conversation with young people and hearing their ideas during the Junior World Food Day event. The active participation and enthusiasm of young people will ensure that “Leaving No One Behind” is at the forefront of their thoughts and actions, in their heads and hearts. Small-scale farms produce more than a third of the world’s food. They are the foundations of our agrifood systems, yet they are too often excluded from opportunities. If we are truly committed to ensuring that no one is left behind, we have to transform our current agrifood systems to provide equal opportunities for all producers and help smallholder farmers gain access to new markets. We must invest in rural transformation, and in infrastructure, training, incentives, data, innovation and technology.

Governments should integrate a pledge to “Leave No One Behind” into their national strategies, enabling policies, budgets, services and partnerships for achieving the SDGs and we need increased investments in agriculture. Agriculture is among the most cost-effective humanitarian-development-peace nexus! International financial institutions must support the financial access of developing countries so that they can keep providing robust social safety nets, invest in rural areas and strengthen their agrifood systems. The private sector can become key partners for development, including through creating truly inclusive markets and innovative business models. No organization, government or institution or partners can eradicate hunger and poverty alone. SDG1 and SDG2 cannot be achieved in isolation!

This year’s World Food Day is unprecedented because for the first time we are celebrating colleagues and partners who are working tirelessly to make a difference in people’s lives. This year we have launched the revamped FAO Awards to recognize progress in transforming agrifood systems and achieving the SDGs. During this World Food Day, we will celebrate the first-ever winner of the FAO Achievement Award, which recognizes professional achievements in various sectors of agrifood systems. Through their accomplishments, FAO Awardees have demonstrated that we have the tools, knowledge, best practice, and capacity to make a positive change. Their achievements inspire action and encourage even greater collaboration to transform agrifood systems, and to ensure that we leave no one behind.

We need to act with passion and compassion. We need to value the food we eat, and those that produce it. We need to aim for zero food waste and significantly reduce losses, care for our natural resources, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Small actions make a big difference, and one drop of water reflects the brightness of the sunshine.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the strong commitment of FAO to continue working with all partners and stakeholders to build a new era of hope for a better future, for everyone, everywhere. Let’s ensure that World Food Day 2022 be remembered as being an unprecedented start!

Thank you!

QU Dongyu
Director-General, FAO