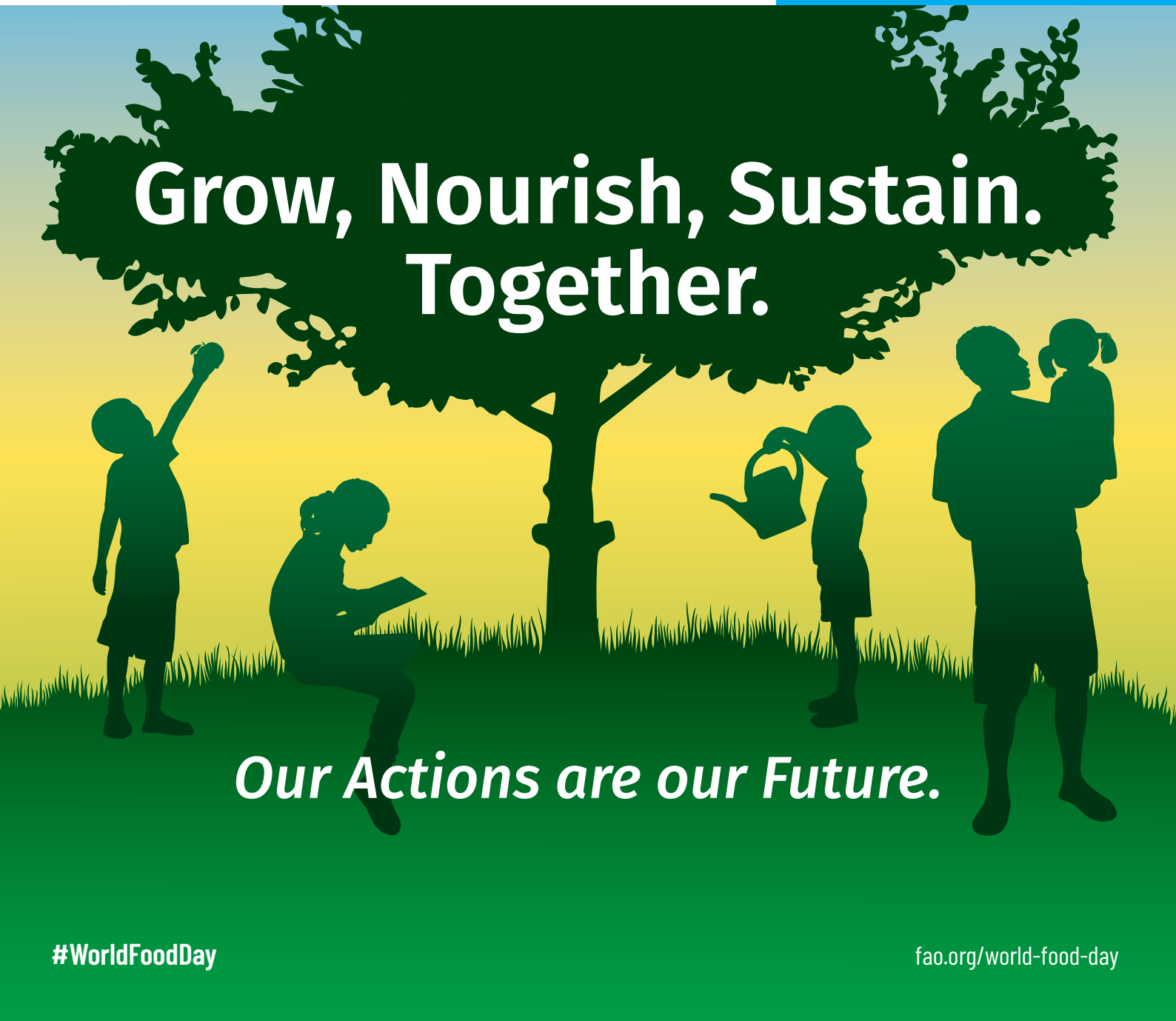
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FAO75 Grow, Nourish, Sustain. Together.

16 October 2020

World Food Day



#WorldFoodDay

fao.org/world-food-day

New challenges

In the 75 years since the founding of FAO, the world has made great progress in the fight against poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. Agricultural productivity and food systems have come a long way. Still, too many people remain vulnerable. More than 2 billion people do not have regular access to enough safe, nutritious food. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to this challenge, threatening to reverse important gains in food security, nutrition, and livelihoods. Now is the time to address the persistent inequalities and inefficiencies that have continued to plague our food systems, economies and social support structures. Now is the time to build back better.

75 YEARS OF FAO

- FAO was founded in 1945 with a commitment to improve lives.
- FAO has more than 194 member states and works in over 130 countries worldwide.
- We believe that everyone can play a role in ending hunger and transforming our food systems.

Decade of Action

We are at a turning point in international efforts to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The year 2020 opens the Decade of Action to Deliver the Global Goals, to end poverty and hunger, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. SDG2 (to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture) highlights the need to achieve food security by improving access to nutritious food through sustainable food systems. We still have much work to do. More than ever, we need innovative solutions and strong partnerships.

Resilience and sustainability

Some 80 percent of the world's extremely poor people live in rural areas and most of them rely directly on agriculture for their livelihoods. To improve lives sustainably, we must transform the way in which food is produced, processed, traded, consumed, and wasted, to ensure that we can meet our future needs without degrading and depleting the biodiversity and other natural resources on which we all rely.

Short term, long term

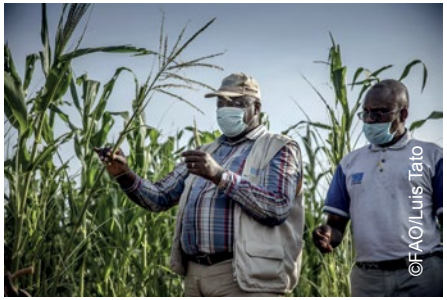
FAO works to build long-term resilience and sustainability while also supporting short-term solutions for vulnerable communities, especially those which are already grappling with other emergencies, such as acute hunger, conflict or disease. Countries which rely heavily on food imports, such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and countries which depend on primary exports like oil, also need special attention.

The COVID-19 crisis

Ensuring access to safe and nutritious food is an essential part of the response to COVID-19. Measures adopted to slow the transmission of COVID-19 have helped to save lives. Still, some pandemic-related restrictions have made access to food and income even more difficult for vulnerable families, with food prices rising and wages falling in most countries which were already experiencing food crises. FAO worked with family farmers and coordinated with public and private sector institutions, to quickly respond with interventions ranging from social protection schemes to agricultural support.

Quick action

- In **Peru**, organic banana growers trained by FAO continued to supply the national school feeding programme, which delivered meals to children at home.
- In **Haiti**, FAO helped the Ministry of Agriculture to revive essential springtime -agricultural production in communities with acute food insecurity, distributing vegetable seeds and plant cuttings to households covering nearly 50-thousand people in hard-hit northeast departments. FAO also sensitized households to the risks of the spread of COVID-19 and the need to follow official preventive measures.
- In **Spain**, fisher folk in the historic L'Horta irrigation district, a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) recognized by FAO, took orders by text message and delivered fresh fish by bicycle to the elderly and others who were unable to leave their homes during lockdown.
- In **Georgia**, farmers in 22 municipalities were invited to apply for emergency grants to cover 75 percent of the cost of growing vegetables, roots, tubers, and berries, and given technical help to install and use drip irrigation systems.
- In **Pakistan**, FAO distributed animal feed to struggling livestock farmers, helped to bolster their resilience and business skills by setting up a farmer field school, and arranged for the distribution of drip irrigation and vegetable farming kits.
- In **Oman**, digital technology has helped fish merchants to respond to physical distancing and other COVID-19 restrictions by taking their wholesale fish auctions online, complete with photos and catch details for buyers. With FAO's technical support, Omani's agriculture officials and the Oman Technology Fund piloted the digital-sales platform with plans to expand it.
- In **South Sudan**, FAO reorganized seed deliveries to vulnerable farmers in keeping with COVID-19 restrictions, reducing gatherings like county-wide seed fairs and providing farmers, instead, with cash to purchase seeds directly from local vendors.



FOOD HEROES

Family farmers everywhere--nearly 800 million people--have long been agricultural innovators. They manage 75 percent of the world's agricultural land and produce about 80 percent of the world's food and they are constantly working to adapt their methods to everything from pests to weather-related crises. These food heroes have continued to work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the first in a long line of workers dedicated to producing, processing, transporting and marketing food under difficult circumstances. Most of us rely on them but often, smallholder farmers are the ones who are most vulnerable in a crisis.

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Biodiversity and balance

Recent developments like the COVID-19 pandemic, and locust and other pest infestations, are stark reminders of the interdependence of humans, animals and the environment. FAO's short-term priorities have included addressing the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency, but our long-term response must address the underlying causes of emerging diseases and other challenges potentially linked to the loss and degradation of biodiversity.

Boosting sustainable food systems

Agroecology helps to organize crops, livestock farms and landscapes to conserve biodiversity and to give vulnerable communities extra support. In Cambodia and Lao PDR, for example, FAO has supported organic farming livelihoods by helping smallholder producers to gain access to new markets through the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). In 2020, the importance of sustainable food systems received new confirmation from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund, which contributed USD 176 million to FAO-led projects that promote sustainable use of natural resources and climate-smart practices. The funding will go to 24 projects in countries ranging from Brazil to Yemen.

Digital tools for locust control

Pandemic-related restrictions on the movement of personnel and equipment were introduced just when many countries, especially in Africa, Asia, and the Near East, were stepping up their fight against the Desert Locust--the most destructive migratory pest in the world. FAO intensified its remote data collection on the Desert Locust and has encouraged susceptible countries to use eLocust3, a rugged handheld tablet and digital application. The app records and transmits data in real time via satellite from remote areas to national locust centres, and to the Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS) at FAO's Rome headquarters. Between 2015 and mid-2020, more than 450 of these handheld devices were distributed to locust-control teams in various countries and FAO has developed versions for mobile phones and GPS devices.

SPOTLIGHT: **AEROPONICS FOR FOOD**

At least 30 farmers in Rwanda are producing food without soil or natural light, to help meet the needs of a growing population. They use aeroponics to cultivate crops by suspending the roots in the air and growing the plants in a humid environment. The use of aeroponics in Rwanda was pioneered by Apollinaire Karegeya, who initially faced challenges in getting quality seeds from his crops, due to problems with plant bacteria and viruses. In 2018, an FAO project to promote the roots and tubers sector in Africa provided Karegeya with training in better storage techniques, agribusiness, and working with financial institutions.

Innovation

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It is vital to scale-up innovation in agriculture, including digitalization and e-commerce, while producing in a more sustainable way.

FAO Director-General QU Dongyu on Twitter

One key lesson which FAO has learned in its 75 years is that simply producing more food is not enough. We need to ensure that food systems are sustainable and that they deliver affordable, healthy diets for us all, including the most vulnerable among us. Innovative technologies, science, research and private sector companies can all help us to transform the ways in which we produce and consume food--for the well-being of our communities, our economies, and our planet.

Hand-in-Hand Initiative

FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative is an innovative business model designed to bring potential partners together across the public, private, IFI, academic, civil society, and other sectors. It matches donors with recipients and uses data and modeling to support tailor-made efforts in the world's least developed countries, SIDS, and others with food crises.

The Initiative's new Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform will help countries to pursue science-based and data-driven decision making, bringing together more than 20 FAO units across multiple domains, from animal health to trade and markets. The platform is integrating data from across FAO in categories like soil, land, water, climate, fisheries, livestock, crops, trade, and social and economics data. It also draws on information from FAO partners and public data providers, including NGOs, the private sector and space agencies.

FAO at work

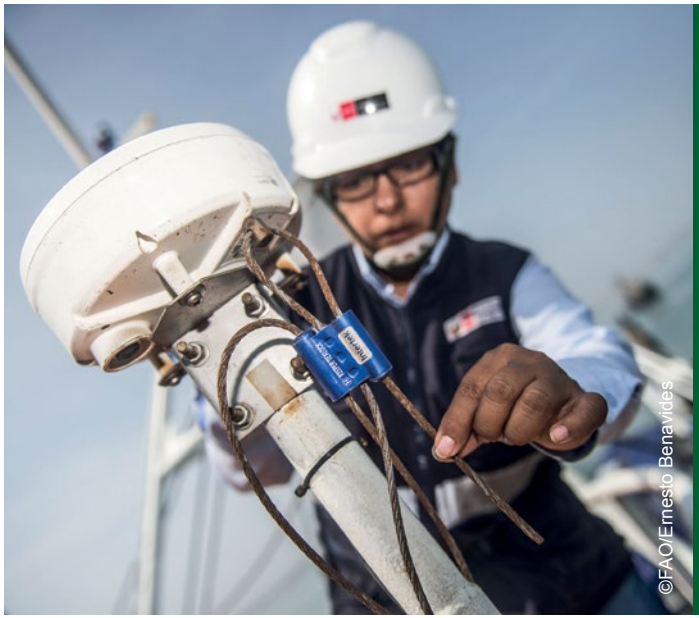
FAO makes use of its broad network of offices, partners, technical expertise, and access to data to provide support to global, regional, and national policies, strategies, and programmes on food security and nutrition and related issues. Here is some of what we do:

- Develop and support formulation of scientific or technical standards, methods and approaches, which can then be applied at the country level.
- Work with partners to write policy-oriented norms and standards for international agreements and conventions.
- Develop and support databases and information systems at the global level.
- Produce studies, reports and information, such as the flagship publication The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World.
- Support the development and sharing of innovation in sustainable agriculture and improve access to relevant digital tools.
- Provide and support capacity development and awareness-raising programmes.

Data for smart policymaking

FAO uses data and analysis to support decision makers in numerous ways:

- Producing technical and policy briefs on the impact of situations like COVID-19 on livelihoods, food and agriculture, markets, poverty and nutrition.
- Gathering—through the Data Lab and the use of big data--a global assessment which identifies and tracks policy responses in a broad range of areas, such as emergencies, nutrition, social protection and incentives.
- Using our Food and Agriculture Policy Decisions Analysis (FAPDA) database to give an overview of policy decisions adopted by countries to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture.
- Using the Food Price Monitoring and Analysis Tool, with the latest information on domestic food prices and crop calendars to support recommendations on planting and harvesting during the COVID-19 outbreak.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SPOTLIGHT: **DIGITAL APP FOR WATER MANAGEMENT**

FAO and Spanish telecommunications company Telefónica have brought digital water sensors, automated weather stations, and other cutting-edge technologies and innovations, to rural farmers in several Latin American countries. The partnership is helping farmers to better manage water resources and cope with extreme climate-related events. Telefónica's Smart Agro digital application uses remote sensors to help farmers monitor, control and predict moisture conditions and water needs. The app has helped farmers with potato and coffee production in Colombia, cotton farming in Peru, and various crops in El Salvador. In Ecuador, Smart Agro is providing other types of information, such as livestock status and greenhouse gas-emission levels.

Our actions are our future

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What can countries do?

- Meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations through emergency food assistance and improved, more accessible, social safety nets.
- Support the dissemination and use of data.
- Support urgent measures to increase food availability from smallholder farmers.
- Establish evidence-based policies and legal support for sustainable food systems, such as regulations on nutrition, decent employment, and land resources.
- Work together to make food systems more resilient to volatility and climate shocks.
- Ensure that sustainable food systems deliver affordable healthy diets for the poor and decent livelihoods for food system workers.
- Encourage more climate-smart and environment-friendly practices to preserve natural resources, promote dietary health, support climate regulation, and slow the biodiversity destruction that can contribute to disease outbreaks.
- Prioritize innovation and digitalization and work to close the digital divide.
- In times of crisis, consider government procurement schemes to buy agricultural commodities from small producers to establish or increase stocks of non-perishable items.
- When battling health and economic crises with aggressive public spending, adopt measures to avoid food price volatility.
- Practice global solidarity or international cooperation to avoid devastating effects on smallholder famers in countries with very limited fiscal capacities.

What can the private sector do?

- Private businesses should invest in sustainable, resilient food systems which offer decent employment.
- Companies should develop, adapt, and share technologies that help to transform food systems.
- Private sector food businesses and retailers should make sustainable food choices attractive, available, and affordable.
- Companies should develop plans to minimize food losses and waste in production and processing and use or share excess stocks and food surpluses.
- Companies should respect national regulations and measures to protect food safety, food quality and the well-being of staff along the entire food chain, especially in developing countries.
- Digital sector companies can help to build the resilience of food chains. They can develop, adapt, and share technologies to address transport, supply and demand issues, and help to smooth temporary shortages or surpluses.
- Food companies, including e-commerce firms, can embrace or share new technologies to manage supplies, especially highly perishable goods.
- In times of crisis, banks and financial institutions can help farmers with outstanding loans by considering measures like waiving fees, extending payment due dates, or offering alternative repayment plans.
- Large, healthy enterprises can help to insulate supply chains and consider extending credit to help smaller businesses stay afloat.
- Companies can share expertise or technologies with public and other private entities to help improve sustainable food production and livelihoods. Mobile apps and other digital tools can help tackle challenges ranging from climate change and crop pests to pandemics.
- Companies should be mindful of their impact on natural resources and adopt a sustainable approach.

SPOTLIGHT: **SUPPORTING LIVELIHOODS IN SYRIA**

In Syria, farmers have had to adapt repeatedly to keep the country's important wheat production going. They have persevered amid conflict, displacement, and acute food insecurity. Growers have had to contend with seed shortages and stolen or vandalized farm equipment. Lessened conflict and good rainfall helped to improve wheat crops in 2019, but the arrival of COVID-19 restrictions in early 2020 brought new challenges. Farmers could no longer travel far to take their animals to graze, purchase supplies, or sell products at the market. FAO coordinated with UN partners and multiple donors to deliver seeds to growers for spring wheat planting. They also helped farmers to build tunnels to house vegetable seedlings and repair and rebuild irrigation systems. FAO substituted classroom training in agriculture and entrepreneurship with smaller, outdoor lessons to observe pandemic-related physical distancing schemes. Together with the World Food Programme, FAO has helped communities to keep track of pricing on seeds, pesticides, and other necessities.

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What can we all do?

We all have a role to play to realize the vision of a world without hunger and malnutrition. We must not let sustainable habits fall by the wayside in times of crisis. We can make healthy food choices. We can do our part to reduce waste. We can advocate for governments, enterprises, and organizations to share knowledge and support sustainable, resilient food systems and livelihoods. Together, we can grow, nourish, and sustain our world.

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SPOTLIGHT: **STRENGTH IN PARTNERSHIPS**

Donor countries, development banks, civil protection experts, private sector foundations, and other UN agencies, are among those who have coordinated actions with and provided support for FAO. Crucial private sector support for locust control following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic included 10 million USD in funding from Mastercard Foundation to invest in a range of activities, including early detection, spraying, and safety measures.

Fast facts

More than **2 billion** people do not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food.

About **135 million** people across **55** countries experience acute hunger requiring urgent food, nutrition, and livelihoods assistance.

The global population is expected to reach almost **10 billion** by **2050**, significantly increasing the demand for food.

Approximately **14%** of the food produced for consumption globally each year is lost before reaching the wholesale market.

If our food systems are not transformed, undernourishment and malnutrition will greatly increase by **2050**. The consequences could worsen due to income inequality, unemployment, or poor access to services.

More than **3 billion** people in the world lack access to the Internet, most of them in rural and remote areas. Smallholder farmers need greater access to innovation, technology, finance and training to improve their livelihoods.

Intensified food production, combined with climate change, is causing a rapid loss of biodiversity. Currently, only nine plant species account for **66 %** of total food crop production.

Poor diets and sedentary lifestyles have led to **soaring obesity rates**, not only in developed countries, but also low-income countries, where hunger and obesity often coexist. No region is exempt.

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World Food Day

Each year, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) celebrates World Food Day on 16 October to commemorate is founding in 1945. As FAO marks its 75th Anniversary, it continues to work with partners in every region to help those who are most vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, to make food systems more resilient, and to make livelihoods more sustainable. The widespread effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have underscored the importance for all of us to show global solidarity and take action.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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