

A stylized, colorful illustration of a landscape. The foreground features rolling green hills with a brown path. On the left, there is a green tree, a purple flower, and an orange flower. A small red bird is flying in the sky. The background consists of light blue and white wavy bands representing the sky.

# HEALTHY PEOPLE DEPEND ON HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS

*Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition*

*World Food Day - 16 October 2013*

# What is the World Food Day About?

- Anniversary of the foundation of FAO in 1945
- The main objective of this day is raising awareness worldwide of the issues behind poverty and hunger.

FAO's mission is to

- Ensuring sustainable food and nutrition security for all,
  - reducing rural poverty,
  - sustainable management of natural resources.
- This year on WFD, FAO is promoting the food systems concept, and calling on everyone from customers to policy makers to recognize where they can play a role in making these systems healthier – for people and the planet.

# Major problems of the current agricultural and food systems

Malnutrition today comes in many different forms:

- globally, 842 million people go hungry every day, and
- 165 million children (one in four) under 5 are stunted and will never reach their full physical and cognitive potential.
- About 2 billion people lack vitamins and minerals essential for good health.
- In our region hunger remains under 5% of the population
- At the same time, some 1.4 billion people are overweight. Of these, about one-third are obese and at risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes or other health problems.

# Major problems of the current agricultural and food systems

The crop and livestock sectors use 70% of freshwater resources and, together with forestry, occupy 60% of the Earth's land surface.

Livestock alone uses 80% of global crop and pasture area.

60 percent of world's ecosystems are degraded or used unsustainably.

Resulted environmental problems are:

- climate change,
- land scarcity and degradation,
- freshwater pollution,
- loss of biological diversity,
- degradation of forest and fishery resources,
- and contamination from agricultural chemicals,
- Wasted resources.

# Major problems of the current agricultural and food systems

## Unacceptably high food losses and wastes

- Roughly one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year – approximately 1.3 billion tonnes – gets lost or wasted globally.
- Every year, consumers in rich countries waste almost as much food (222 million tonnes) as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (230 million tonnes).
- Food losses represent a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs.
- Producing food that will not be consumed leads to unnecessary CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in addition to loss of economic value of the food produced.

# Major problems of the current agricultural and food systems

*Frequent food safety incidents – such as contamination with biological, chemical or physical hazards – cause an enormous burden on economies globally due to*

- frequent disruptions or restrictions of global and regional agri-food trade,*
- loss of food and associated income,*
- increased cost of health care,*
- and also contribute to food insecurity and the poverty cycle affecting the most vulnerable populations.*

# Major trends and forces in agricultural production

The FAO baseline projection of an increase of 70% in global food demand in 2050. These projections are of demand, not of needs. Even though supply will rise, there will still be undernourishment and malnutrition as these depend not only on food availability but also on the distribution of income.

- Rates of growth in agricultural production have been slowing, (still modern food production allows us to produce more food today than at any time in history).
- Increased competition for land and water (biofuel)
- Climate change, Water scarcity is growing.
- Salinization and pollution of water courses and bodies, and degradation of water-related ecosystems are rising.

# Opportunities for improvements

Most of the negative impacts from agriculture on the environment can be reduced or prevented by an appropriate mix of policies, awareness rising, education and technological changes.

- There is already a growing public pressure for a more environmentally benign agriculture.
- Countries also have to comply with international Conventions (e.g. CBD, UNFCCC).
- Countries are forced to reduce commodity price distortions and input subsidies, remove policy interventions having negative environmental impacts, and to integrate environmental considerations into agricultural policies.
- More efficient use of natural resources (soil, water, biodiversity)
- Wide use of the precautionary principle – scientific evidence.
- International action has also been taken to strengthen research on the biophysical changes that agriculture is causing.



## More opportunities :

- Using safe and effective methods to control losses (due to pests and diseases) in production, processing and storage is crucial.
- In traditional food systems, improved sanitation, food handling and storage technologies could boost efficiency and improve food safety and nutritional quality.
- Reducing food and nutrient losses and waste through food systems could improve human nutrition and relieve pressure on productive resources.
- Awareness rising: Consumers can do their part by making healthy choices when shopping for food, educating children about good nutrition, and changing so that less food is wasted at home

# Elements for sustainable agriculture and rural development

## INTEGRATED ACTIVITIES

- **International level:** more effective integration of international policies and initiatives dealing with land and water management.
- **Government level:** policies, instruments (subsidies, payment for environmental services), development plans, agrarian reform, nutrition surveys, food quality and food security, data, monitoring, early warning systems
- **Rural community level:** development of local organizations and capacity building for people's participation, training, extension
- **Area level:** coastal zones, watersheds, river basins, agroecological zones
- **Production unit level:** farming systems, diversification to increase incomes, creation of rural industries,
- **Consumer level:** awareness raising, adjusting dietary patterns, product marketing

# Key messages

FAO would like to bring forward on the occasion of the World Food Day this year the following three key messages:

- *Good nutrition depends on healthy diets.*
- *Healthy diets require healthy food systems – along with education, health, sanitation and other factors.*
- *Healthy food systems are made possible by appropriate policies, incentives and governance.*



*Thank you for your  
attention!*

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