



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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on the occasion of

WORLD FOOD DAY

16 October 2017

“Change the future of migration. Invest in food security and rural development”

People are on the move. Political instability, extreme weather events and other factors have forced more people to flee their homes than at any time since the Second World War.

The vast majority of migrants, about 763 million, move within their own countries. Many migrants come from rural areas, where more than 75 per cent of the world’s poor and food insecure depend on agriculture and natural resource-based livelihoods. Their prime motivation is often to escape hardships caused by a variety of factors. Poverty, food insecurity, lack of job opportunities and increased competition for scarce land and water resources lead people to seek an escape. The effects of climate change as well as political conflicts are likely to create further migration pressures both within and across countries.

The consequences of migration pose several challenges and opportunities for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development. Importantly, agriculture and rural development can address some of the root causes of migration, as well as natural resource depletion due to environmental degradation and climate change. Creating conditions that allow rural people to stay at home if safe to do so, and have more resilient livelihoods, is a crucial component of any plan to tackle the migration challenge.

Food production depends largely on biodiversity and on the services provided by ecosystems. We would not have the thousands of different crop varieties and animal breeds without the rich genetic pool of the species they originated from. We could not keep livestock, fish or grow trees and other



plants without the services delivered by the terrestrial and marine ecosystems underpinned by biodiversity, including the often invisible contribution from micro-organisms and invertebrates.

The genetic diversity within components of food production ensures continuing improvements in food production, allows adaptation to current needs and ensures adaptability to future ones. Agricultural biodiversity is also essential for agricultural production systems, supporting the provision of ecosystem services such as pollination, pest control, nutrient cycling, erosion control and water supply.

With climate change comes more frequent and more extreme weather events. Thus it is critical that we build more resilient agricultural landscapes and food systems. We can achieve this through sustainable ecological intensification of agriculture, including reducing our reliance on agrochemicals for increasing and improving yields, while minimizing negative impacts on the environment by integrating the ecosystem services delivered by biodiversity into agricultural production systems.

We also need to ensure the health and safety of the soil ecosystem. Ecosystem services from soil can include contributions to food security, climate change mitigation, water retention, and biomass. As stated in the World Soil Charter, careful soil management not only secures sustainable agriculture, it provides for climate regulation and a pathway for safeguarding ecosystem services. Healthy soils also help to prevent erosion, desertification, and landslides.

There is no question that investing in sustainable rural development, climate change adaptation and resilient rural livelihoods is an important part of the global response to the current migration challenge. Today, on World Food Day, let us remember the role that biodiversity plays in providing for food security and human well-being.
