



STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

on the occasion of

**WORLD FOOD DAY**  
**16 October 2019**

**“Healthy diets for a Zero Hunger world”**

This year, World Food Day calls for action across sectors to make healthy and sustainable diets affordable and accessible to everyone. It is a reminder that without healthy nature and biodiversity, we cannot have quality nutrition, and without quality nutrition we cannot have good health. It is a reminder that diets are at the core of human health and a healthy planet.

However, recent studies have found that our daily diet is a bigger killer than smoking and is now involved in one in five deaths around the world. This means that the food we eat is putting 11 million of us into an early grave each year. Improving our diets could potentially prevent one in every five deaths globally.

Incredible steps have been taken to reduce hunger and improve nutrition around the globe, however the double burden of undernutrition coexisting with overweight and obesity is a telling sign that the current dominant model of agricultural production is hurting both our health and the natural systems that we rely on.

Intensified food production is damaging our environment. Although the value of agricultural crop production has increased almost threefold since 1970, indicators of nature’s regulating contributions – such as soil health and pollinator diversity – have declined, showing that gains in material benefits are not always sustainable. Furthermore, research shows that from the more than 6,000 plant species that have been cultivated for food, only nine account for almost 70 percent of total crop production. This means there is great potential to leverage the multi-faceted benefits of biodiversity for food.



Our food systems are, now more than ever, based on low diversity and high chemical inputs that undermine the long-term sustainability of food systems and reduce essential ecosystem services produced in agricultural landscapes. Even as commercial offerings have become more diverse in many countries, what people buy and eat is becoming more homogenized. As nations urbanize and incomes rise above poverty levels, diets tend to become high in sugar, fats, refined carbohydrates, meat and dairy. Today, 75 percent of humanity's food is generated from only 12 plants and five animal species. Transitioning to diversified, sustainable production systems, which is essential and urgent, will depend on our ability to leverage the transformative force of agricultural biodiversity.

The evidence for food diversity as a major factor in health has grown substantially. No single food contains all the necessary nutrients for overall health and wellness. By eating a balanced diet filled with a wide range of foods, it is easy to ensure adequate amounts of all essential nutrients are met. This not only reduces the risk of nutritional deficiencies, but it also provides numerous health and environmental benefits.

On this World Food Day, I invite all stakeholders to help promote varied, healthy diets with low environmental impacts, diets that include plant-based foods (fruits, vegetables, whole grains and pulses), locally-produced, home-prepared foods that provide the right amount of calories, sustainably-sourced fish or shellfish, moderate amounts of milk and dairy product and modest amounts of fats and oils and meat.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize the importance of promoting production systems based on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and traditional knowledge, as they have the potential to offer invaluable benefits to nutrition and healthy diets, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups. In short, we must safeguard biodiversity to ensure healthy diets for a Zero Hunger world.

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