



Statement by Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
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on the occasion of
World Food Day

Our Actions are our Future

On this World Food Day, let's take the actions that will allow us to create a future of life in harmony with nature.

We know now that our existing food production systems are one of the key drivers of biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation.

About 21 to 37 per cent of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are attributable to the food system. More than a third of the world's land surface and nearly 75 per cent of freshwater resources are devoted to crop or livestock production, acting as the principal cause of habitat loss and threatening the diversity of 86 per cent of animal and plant species known to be at risk of extinction.

We can overcome this triple challenge through nature-friendly and climate-friendly food production systems that support and enhance biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions.

Ensuring food security, conserving biodiversity, reducing carbon emissions and building climate resilience are all non-negotiable. A holistic approach is what we need for a sustainable future.

Work we are doing to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework suggests that we need to promote agrobiodiversity both in our diets and in our production landscapes.

We need to redesign food systems through agro-ecological approaches that minimize pressures on biodiversity, climate land and water. We must promote actions that sequester carbon in soils and biomass, enhance genetic diversity of crops and livestock, manage soil biodiversity and integrate nature-based solutions for better land and water management.

Importantly, we also need to phase out or repurpose harmful agriculture subsidies that negatively impact biodiversity and ecosystems under the purview of intensive agriculture and monocropping. Eighty-seven per cent - out of \$540 billion of annual government support to agricultural producers - includes both measures that are price distorting and those that can be harmful to nature and health. We need to rethink our agricultural support schemes.



We need to promote sustainable and healthy diets with a greater emphasis on a diversity of foods and nutrients, and more moderate consumption of meat and fish, as well as dramatic cuts in the waste involved in food supply and consumption.

And lastly, we need to support smallholder farmers, indigenous communities, youth and women farmers as ambassadors of sustainable food systems. We must strengthen smallholder farmers in their dual role as producers and stewards of biodiversity using a rights-based approach. We need to do this while also incentivizing large-scale producers to shift towards more sustainable practices.

The time has come to take the actions that will make food system transitions to a new economic and social paradigm that values nature for people, planet and prosperity.