



Food and Agriculture
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NEWS RELEASE

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FAO Regional Conference will seek joint solutions to the challenges of food and agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean

The governments of the region - together with the private sector, the academic and scientific world and civil society - will discuss how to transform food systems, generate prosperous rural societies and a sustainable and resilient agriculture post-COVID19 climate.



The Regional Conference kicked off with an unprecedented level of attendance.

October 19, 2020, Santiago de Chile - Transforming food systems so that everyone can have access to healthy diets; moving hand in hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies; building sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture.

These are the three priorities that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) proposed today to its member countries, during the opening of the 36th FAO Regional Conference.

The Regional Conference, which will last from October 19 to 21, and has Nicaragua as this year's host country, is the highest governing body of FAO in the region: there, the Organization reports on its actions and the countries establish FAO's priorities for the next two years.

“This conference is a unique opportunity for all countries to promote a great transformation of their food, agriculture, fishing, livestock and forestry. It is time to promote innovation, and to trace the path that will help us rebuild and transform to face the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic”, said the FAO's Regional Representative, Julio Berdegú.

Halting the rise of malnutrition

According to FAO, before the pandemic, hunger in the region affected 47 million people; overweight and obesity affected 60% of adults, and 50% of the rural population lived in poverty. This situation can be drastically worsened by the pandemic, and requires transforming food systems in order to provide healthy diets for all.

“We must improve the way we produce, distribute and consume food so that everyone can have access to healthy diets”, Berdegú explained.

A new rural world

Advancing hand in hand to achieve prosperous and inclusive rural societies requires encouraging and supporting the emergence of new economic activities in the countryside, which offer greater and better development opportunities to rural communities, reducing the current gaps in wellbeing with regard to cities.

This implies making agriculture more efficient and productive and improving trade and access to markets. In addition, FAO emphasizes the need to accelerate the digitization of agriculture and the rural world, taking steps to make this an inclusive process, leaving no one behind.

"With better Internet services, information and telecommunications technologies, a transition to digital agriculture and digital rural societies can be achieved, one that stimulates the development of new economic opportunities in our region's lagging territories," said FAO's Regional Representative.

Through interventions such as FAO's Hand in Hand Initiative, rural development, rural non-agricultural employment can be promoted, and private investment, basic infrastructure and greater links between the agricultural sector and markets can be stimulated.

Sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture

Latin America and the Caribbean must carry out a transformation towards sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture, fisheries, livestock, and forestry, which can be a source of growth, but with a much smaller environmental footprint and a better balance with ecosystems and biodiversity.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and the food system requires combating deforestation, boosting low-emission livestock, re-carbonizing soils, and reducing food loss and waste.

The region must also invest in disaster risk prevention, improve risk information and monitoring systems, and implement productive practices that are resilient to climate change.

Great regional drive towards innovation

FAO has assumed the commitment to promote digital and technological innovation as a priority that informs all its action in Latin America and the Caribbean.

To this end, the Organization will support countries to rapidly develop a regional innovation and digitization roadmap for their food and agriculture, and drive innovation in all areas of agriculture and food.

"The region must digitize its agriculture and its food trade, improving the connectivity of rural areas and the capacities of small, medium and large rural producers and entrepreneurs to take advantage of the ongoing technological revolution," said Berdegué.

Press contacts and interview requests

To request an interview with the FAO Representatives, with the ministers of the countries that will participate in the Conference, or with experts, observers or other participants of the Conference, please write to:

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