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FAO commits technical support to governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to eradicate hunger and poverty

FAO Director-General QU Dongyu met with Presidents and Heads of State during the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summit in Argentina. He also paid an official visit to Paraguay.

26 January 2023, Santiago de Chile - "All FAO teams in the region are ready and committed to providing all the technical expertise and capacity to help meet today's food security challenge", said FAO Director-General QU Dongyu at the VII CELAC Summit held this week in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In this context, the Director General met with the Presidents of Brazil, Ignacio Lula da Silva of Argentina, Alberto Fernández of Bolivia, Luis Arce and of Colombia, Gustavo Pedro. He also had meetings with the Vice President of Costa Rica, Stephan Brunner, and the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ralph Gonsalves, new president pro tempore of CELAC. He discussed with them the need to transform agri-food systems to make them more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

In this context, the Director-General signed a Letter of Intent with the President of Colombia on the Peace Agreement, Food Security, and the Human Right to Food. He also signed agreements with the Minister of Economy, Sergio Massa, on behalf of the Argentinean Government. They aim to promote the development of different regions of the country in the areas of environment, livestock production, sustainable land management, integrated food policies, strengthening of land management, biosecurity, and the strengthening of South-South cooperation.

After the CELAC Summit, the Director-General, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative Mario Lubetkin, FAO Chief Economist Máximo Torero, Chief of Staff Godfrey Magwenzi, and other FAO officials traveled to Asunción, Paraguay, for an official visit.

The agenda started with a meeting with President Mario Abdo Benítez. FAO representatives and Paraguayan government authorities toured jointly implemented projects for rural development, sustainable production, environmental management, and climate change. They also held meetings with representatives of the private sector and dialogued with municipal authorities, producers, and artisanal fishermen.

Update of CELAC's Food Security Nutrition Plan

The "Declaration of Buenos Aires" from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) seventh summit highlighted the Ministers and High Authorities of Agriculture meeting held at the end of last year, which was co-organized by the Pro Tempore Presidency of CELAC, FAO, and other institutions.

In this context, CELAC urged FAO to work with other technical organizations to update the CELAC Food Security, Nutrition, and Hunger Eradication Plan 2025, aiming to adapt it to the new international situation and the challenges of the region.

Mario Lubetkin, FAO regional representative, stated: "Multilateral institutions such as CELAC are fundamental to jointly coordinate regional work to end hunger and malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean. Lubetkin added: "FAO offers all the technical support to develop strategic alliances to help the 56.5 million people suffering from hunger and the 131 million who cannot access a healthy diet. And to advance in the transformation of agri-food systems".

This is the first time the current FAO Director General has participated in a CELAC Summit. In his speech, QU said that Latin America and the Caribbean "can and must take a step forward" to address the growing rates of hunger and inequality and thus be "at the forefront of world food and agriculture."

FAO highlights the importance of regional integration through CELAC as a key element to advance in priority areas of work in the region, such as the need to expand food supply in the Caribbean, where healthy diets are expensive; invest in water infrastructure and food production initiatives in Central America, where droughts and emigration are persistent trends; improve food trade among the countries of the Andean region; and promote a broad regional infrastructure program for food production, storage and transport to facilitate intra-regional trade and exports.

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