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Director-General urges all FAO Members to reduce drivers of migration

At International Conference on Development and Migration convened by Italy, QU Dongyu flags the key role of sustainable and resilient agri-food systems and rural livelihoods

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ROME- Migration can be a positive force in development, but increased international collaboration is needed, QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), said today at an International Conference on Development and Migration in Rome.

“Migration should be a choice, and not a decision based on hunger, poverty, conflict or climate extremes,” he said, noting that a large share of migrants come from rural areas where livelihood opportunities are scarce and under strain. “We need to work collectively to ease the pressures that force people to migrate,” Qu told participants in the Conference, convened by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy to address the root causes behind migratory trends.

The FAO Director-General encouraged FAO Members to adopt innovative policies that reduce the drivers of migration and noted that FAO welcomes and stands ready to support Italy’s proposed “Rome process” to develop and implement a five-year plan to boost growth, investments and sustainable development in countries where out-migration trends are greatest.

He also highlighted that priority should be given to agrifood systems transformation and rural development, and partnerships are crucial.

“Let us act in solidarity with the most vulnerable to provide them with a better future and a better life, and ensure that no one is left behind,” he said.

The Conference took place on the eve of the [UN Food Systems Summit +2](#)

[Stocktaking Moment](#), to be held at FAO's headquarters in Rome from 24 to 26 July. The high-level event seeks to drive countries on the path towards sustainable and resilient agrifood systems, aimed at improving livelihoods, providing food security and nutrition for all, generating decent jobs and helping the rural poor and those who rely on agriculture, pastoralism and fisheries to adapt to contemporary challenges.

Migration dynamics

While forced displacement should be tackled, Qu said that migrants also bring "immense contributions" to host countries that should be positively acknowledged noting that most migrants move [within their own region](#).

"Well-managed migration can be an engine of sustainable economic growth" as migrants can help in areas facing labor shortages, ageing populations and skill gaps in specific sectors including agriculture, he said. "They can be agents of change, bringing in ideas and innovation, both new and traditional."

Forced migration poses different challenges, especially as the most vulnerable people often do not have another choice.

Numerous FAO projects involve supporting people who have been forced to move. They aim to help migrants and internally displaced persons to engage in agrifood systems and agricultural livelihoods, actions that require accessing land and assets in host communities.

FAO has also worked closely with national and local partners to train youths and [returning migrants](#) in countries such as Tunisia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Senegal and Uganda. Furthermore, the Organization collaborates with UN partners to facilitate the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons from Mali, Somalia and the Central African Republic.

Through the ambitious [Great Green Wall Initiative](#) in Africa, for example, FAO is helping mitigate outbound drivers in the Sahel, North Africa and the Horn of Africa by restoring degraded lands and building climate-resilient and sustainable livelihoods, the Director-General noted.

FAO is also collaborating with the Economic Community of West African States on the development of social protection frameworks in ways that benefit migrants and both their host and home communities.

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