



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Making agricultural biotechnologies work for small-holder farmers

International symposium at FAO: 15-17 February 2016

FAO is hosting an international symposium on **"The Role of Agricultural Biotechnologies in Sustainable Food Systems and Nutrition"** from **15-17 February 2016**.

This technical conference will explore how agricultural biotechnologies can benefit small-holder farmers, particularly those in developing countries, who need to improve nutrition and strengthen livelihoods even as their production systems are constrained by climate change, population growth, and other socioeconomic factors.

Through a series of keynote speeches, presentations and side events, the contributions of a wide spectrum of biotechnologies to sustainable food systems and nutrition will be covered. **A high-level ministerial segment will take place on 16 February.**

The symposium focuses mainly on the broad range of biotechnologies that could result in yield increases, better nutritional qualities, and improved productivities of crops, livestock, fish and trees on which smallholder farmers' food systems, nutrition and livelihoods depend.

These biotechnologies encompass a wide range of low-tech to high-tech approaches which can make the development of improved varieties and breeds that adapt to the effects of climate change, faster and more efficient.

Some permit the rapid diagnosis of diseases and pests while others are used in vaccine production and the reduction of the environmental footprints of agricultural production systems.

The focus is on agricultural biotechnologies that are currently available and ready to use by smallholder producers, including low-tech approaches involving artificial insemination, fermentation techniques, biofertilizers etc. up to high-tech approaches involving advanced DNA-based methodologies

While the symposium encompasses genetically modified organisms (GMOs), they are not its main focus.

Participants at the symposium will include representatives from governments, intergovernmental bodies, the private sector, civil society, research and academic institutions, cooperatives, and other producer and farmer organizations.

Students from several universities around the world will be able to participate in an online interactive session to identify and convey key messages to policy and decision makers.

FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva will deliver a welcome address at the start of the two-and-half day event.

The symposium, will close on 17 February with a final plenary session where a summary of the symposium's technical discussions will be presented.

RESOURCES FOR THE MEDIA

[About the symposium](#)
[The programme in detail](#)
[FAQs](#)

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ACCREDITATION:

Advance-accreditation 24 hours prior to the event is required. Send scans of a valid press card *or* letter of assignment on company stationery, plus a valid identification document with photo, to:

FAO-newsroom@fao.org.

You must have these materials with you on the day of the event in order to access FAO.

Please specify which day(s) you wish to attend. Passes are provided on a daily basis only.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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The symposium will focus on three main themes:

- Climate change
- Sustainable food systems and nutrition; and,
- People, policies, institutions and communities.

The event will be webcast live.