



World Food Day 2017

Statement by Mr José Graziano da Silva,
FAO Director-General

Rome, 16 October 2017

His Holiness, Pope Francis;

Excellency Mr Hery Rajaonarimampianina, President of
Madagascar;

Excellency Mr Maurizio Martina, Minister for Agriculture, Food
and Forestry Policy of Italy;

Excellency Mr Lawrence MacAulay, Minister for Agriculture and
Agri-Food of Canada;

Excellency Mr Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Agriculture of the
United States of America;

Excellency Mr Stéphane Travert, Minister for Agriculture and
Food of France;



Excellency Mr Peter Bleser, Parliamentary State Secretary,
Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany;

Excellency Ms *Thérèse* Coffrey, Parliamentary Under Secretary
of State for Environment, Department for Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs of the United Kingdom;

Excellency Mr Luis Videgaray, Secretary for Foreign Affairs,
Mexico;

Excellency Mr Henry Rabary-Njaka, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Madagascar;

Excellency Mr Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for
Agriculture and Rural Development;

Excellency Ms Josefa Sacko, African Union Commissioner for
Rural Economy and Agriculture;

Excellency Ms Virginia Raggi, Mayor of Rome;

Mr Gilbert Hounbo, President, International Fund for
Agricultural Development (IFAD);



Mr David Beasley, Executive Director, World Food Programme
(WFP)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. I am delighted to welcome all of you here to celebrate
World Food Day 2017.
2. I am especially grateful to the Holy Father, who is
honouring all of us with his presence.
3. I extend my special thanks to the President of
Madagascar and also to the many other distinguished
guests who have come from different parts of the
world.
4. As you know, World Food Day also marks FAO's
anniversary. We may be 72, but we have no plans to
retire.
5. Please allow me to continue in Spanish.



6. Holy Father, thank you very much for coming back to FAO.
7. These days your voice is the main reference to the ecumenical values of solidarity and social justice in our tormented world.
8. These values of solidarity and social justice call for greater balance in the relationship between human beings and nature as well as greater balance in the relationship between human beings themselves, as you highlighted in your encyclical *Laudato Si*.
9. FAO shares these values, which are essential for addressing the deep-seated challenges and uncertainties we are living through.
10. A few minutes ago we unveiled a statue in the FAO entrance hall in homage to little Alan Kurdi, the Syrian boy aged just three who moved the world when he



washed up dead, face-down on a Turkish beach in 2015.

11. This gift from Your Holiness to FAO represents the millions of people who are now seeking to escape war in search of a better life.
12. In 2015, there were approximately 64 million refugees and displaced persons in the world, twice as many as 10 years previously.
13. These millions of people make up a diaspora fleeing hunger, violence, climate imbalance, fear and helplessness.
14. And the number of migrants will continue to rise.
15. In 2015, there were more than 240 million international migrants in the world, 40 per cent more than in 2000.
16. The number of internal migrants who stay within their own countries and regions, mainly moving from rural



to urban areas, has already passed 740 million. This number is unprecedented in the history of mankind.

17. Many of the migrants in the world come particularly from areas affected by conflict, by the impact of climate change and by lack of work opportunities in the many pockets of misery present in the world today.
18. For such people, the only hope of a better life is to migrate, even if it means facing dangers such as crossing the Sahara desert and the Mediterranean Sea.
19. Conflict and the impacts of climate change also explain the rise in world hunger after 10 years of steady decline.
20. We are all aware that the number of hungry people increased by more than 38 million in 2016 to a new total of 815 million men, women and children.

Ladies and gentlemen,



21. Migration has always been an essential process in the development of humanity, a source of many financial and cultural benefits for countries of origin, transit and destination.

22. But unfortunately more and more people migrate because they do not have the option of staying in their homes and on their lands.

23. This is why FAO is dedicating World Food Day 2017 to the relationship between migration, farming and rural development.

24. We intend to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty, food insecurity, inequality, unemployment and lack of social protection.

25. In order to save lives, we need to rebuild the environment in which people live, making them more resilient, guaranteeing their livelihoods and giving them the opportunity to lead more dignified lives.



26. Bolstering the resilience of rural communities is also vital in conflict situations, through a combination of humanitarian and development actions.

27. This is the key focus of cooperation between the three Rome agencies: FAO, IFAD and WFP.

28. We must also support migrants to ensure that they are made more welcome in their destination countries.

29. As the Holy Father teaches us, we must welcome, protect, promote and above all integrate.

30. The Ministers of Agriculture of the G7 countries have joined us here at FAO with the aim of stepping up the dialogue to address this unprecedented situation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

31. FAO is working at several levels to ensure that migration is an important tool for sustainable development.



32. In 2018, FAO will co-chair the Global Migration Group together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
33. This group will lead consultations for the adoption of a “Global Compact for Migration” and the resulting document will serve as a basis for promoting safe, regular and orderly migration.
34. This global commitment is important but not enough. We must also act with more determination and solidarity.
35. The theme of World Food Day 2017, “Change the future of migration. Invest in food security and rural development”, is a call for life, work, peace, land, water and our daily bread.



36. In the words of our Organization's motto, FIAT PANIS,
Let there be bread – for everyone.

37. I declare the celebration of World Food Day 2017 open.

Many thanks for your attention.

38. Now I have the honour of giving the floor to His
Holiness, Pope Francis.