



## Linking agriculture, food systems and nutrition: what's your perspective?

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Over the last decades, there has been significant progress in growing more food but this progress has not directly transformed into better health and wellbeing of the people. Problems of widespread under and over nourishment still exist in poor as well rich countries. In many parts of the world there is a major shift in consumption patterns away from locally produced foods to ready to eat, heavily processed foods of low nutritional value. What is going wrong? In order to find the answer, I believe that we need to look at the whole food system, from farm to fork. Producers grow the crops they can sell the best, traders seek profit and consumers want quality food at an affordable price. Working together and ensuring there is adequate demand and supply of nutritious food will lead to more and more healthy, well nourished people in this world.

Alternative food systems, such as growing organic foods and focusing on locally produced foods show us that there is the possibility to change. Examples shared during this online discussion demonstrate that by working with local communities it has been possible to change consumption and production patterns and achieve measurable gains in the nutrition by increasing the production of highly nutritious indigenous food which had been long forgotten and substituted by highly processed foods of low/no nutritional value.

But to make sure that examples like this won't remain a drop in the ocean we need the participation of all, producers, the state, the private sector and consumers to achieve our aims. I hope that the examples given and the experiences shared in the course of this discussion help shed more light on the linkages of agricultural food systems and nutrition and that this topic, so vital for the future of humanity, will be on the top of the agenda of all involved in the fight against hunger. Along with the support of technical experts, celebrity activists can be instrumental in focusing global attention on the need to establish essential, I would even say organic, linkages among different sectors involved in the food chain for improved nutritional well being of the global population.

Let me now add a personal note, coming from the heart. When we talk about food, we talk about something complex which goes beyond simplistic clichés: hunger, malnutrition, obesity, eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia,

touch the very essence of the human condition. There is no panacea but the solutions exist if people are treated with dignity.

I am an actress, but above all, I am a person who believes in the dignity of each and every human being. And when people who suffer are not given the assistance and support needed, all of us should be ashamed.

That is why when I accepted the title of FAO Goodwill Ambassador, in October 2010, I accepted it as a call to action.

I was proud to join the United Nations family to help draw everyone's attention to the very real and dramatic problems of hunger, malnutrition, food insecurity and extreme poverty, as well as the concrete challenges and activities that FAO works on every day.

Today, almost one in every six people on earth wakes up not knowing whether they will have enough to eat. These are the most vulnerable and voiceless people in the world – poor, hungry families suffering from the prolonged impact of high food prices, the global financial crisis, and the increased frequency of climate-related disasters such as drought and hurricanes.

Food security is not only a matter of humanitarian assistance and agricultural development, it is a matter of national security, peace and stability. Without food, people riot, migrate or die. This is the hidden development issue of our generation. At this moment in time we must galvanize all nations, all people and marshal all resources to defeat hunger.

Almost one billion people go hungry. Even if the latest FAO reports have shown some improvements, the number of hungry today still amounts to 925 million. That is 925 million TOO MANY. The world can and must secure food for all hungry people in the world.

Now, and more than ever, we need to work together.

Together we can make sure that the hungry eat today – and are able to feed themselves tomorrow. It's time to act.

Citizens, and governments, must move forward to make food security for all not only a distant dream but a reality within our lifetime.

I wish you a challenging, concrete follow up to this Forum discussion, which I am proud to address.

**Susan Sarandon**

FAO Goodwill Ambassador

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