



联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

Organisation des Nations  
Unies pour l'alimentation  
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная организация  
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las  
Naciones Unidas para la  
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة  
الأغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

E

# CONFERENCE

## Forty-second Session

2021

### Message of His Holiness Pope Francis

Excellency

Mr Michał Kurtyka,

Minister of Climate and Environment of

Poland

**Chairperson of the Forty-Second Session of the FAO Conference**

Mr Chairperson

The world today is still suffering from the health, financial and social crisis brought about by COVID-19. FAO's work to find appropriate responses to the problem of food insecurity and malnutrition – which continue to be major challenges of our time – is therefore clearly of particular relevance in this context. Despite the achievements of past decades, many of our brothers and sisters still do not have access to the quantity or quality of food they need.

Last year, the number of people at risk of acute food security and in need of immediate support for subsistence reached the highest number in the last five years. This situation could worsen in the future. Conflicts, extreme weather events, financial crises and the current health crisis have brought famine and hunger for millions of people. This means we must adopt policies that can tackle the structural causes that give rise to these growing vulnerabilities before we can address them.

To provide a solution to these needs, we must above all ensure that food systems are resilient, inclusive, sustainable and able to provide healthy and affordable diets for all. It would therefore be beneficial to develop a circular economy, which guarantees resources for everyone, including future generations, and promotes the use of renewable energies. If we are to recover from the crisis that is ravaging us, we must develop an economy tailored to fit mankind, not motivated mainly by profit but anchored in the common good, ethically friendly and kind to the environment.

Rebuilding our economies after the pandemic will offer us a chance to retrace our steps and invest in a global food system that can withstand future crises. This includes promoting sustainable and diversified agriculture that considers the valuable role of family farming and rural communities. Paradoxically, the very people who produce food are the ones who are going hungry. Three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihoods. However, due to lack of access to markets, land ownership, financial resources, infrastructure and technologies, these brothers and sisters of ours are the ones who are most vulnerable to food insecurity.

I appreciate and encourage the efforts the international community is making to enable each country to implement the necessary arrangements to achieve food autonomy, whether through new development and consumption models or through forms of community organization that preserve local ecosystems and biodiversity (see Enc. *Laudato si'*, 129.180). It could be very beneficial to draw on the potential of innovation to support smallholders and help them build capacities and resilience. Your work is therefore very important in the current time of crisis.

In the present situation, the key step we must take to launch recovery is to promote a culture of care, ready to stand up to the individualistic and aggressive tendency to throw things away, which is so prevalent in our societies. While a minority spread tension, confrontations and falsehoods, we are called on to build, patiently and with conviction, a culture of peace intended to foster initiatives that embrace all aspects of human life and help us to reject the virus of indifference.

Dear friends, merely making plans is not enough to galvanize the international community to action. We need tangible actions rooted in our common membership of the human family and the fostering of fraternity. These actions must facilitate the creation of a society that promotes education, dialogue and equality.

Individual responsibility engenders collective responsibility, which in turn encourages the family of nations to shoulder specific, effective commitments. In this context, it is relevant to say, “Let us not think only of our interests, our vested interests. Let us welcome this time of trial as an opportunity to prepare for our collective future, a future for all without discarding anyone. Because without an all-embracing vision, there will be no future for anyone” (*Homily at the Holy Mass on the Liturgical Feast of Divine Mercy*, 19 April 2020).

I offer warm greetings to you, Mr Chairperson, the Director-General of FAO, the representatives of the various nations and international organizations and also the other participants. I wish to express my gratitude for your efforts. The Holy See and the Catholic Church, with its structures and institutions, support the work of this Conference and stand beside you in your dedication to a more just world, which seeks to serve our defenceless and needy brothers and sisters.

Fraternally,

*Pope Francis*

Vatican City, 14 June 2021