

Headline: Tackling climate change and fighting hunger

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AS WE write, the COP21, also known as the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, is being held in Paris, even as France's capital struggles to overcome the tragedy wrought by the simultaneous terrorist attacks that killed at least 128 people a few days earlier. COP21 offers a fresh opportunity for the international community to come together and show its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the most appropriate way to promote a fairer, safer and more inclusive world, where no one is left behind.

There will be no peace without sustainable development. And there will never be sustainable development while people continue to feel excluded and suffer from extreme poverty and hunger. The task of building a better world must involve everyone. That is what the 2030 Agenda is about: universality, solidarity and inclusiveness.

And the 17 SDGs are intertwined, with SDG 13 probably best representing the connectivity of all these goals.

SDG 13 is specific to climate change. It calls on countries to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Failure to do so would put at risk whatever gains have been and will be made in all the other SDGs, in particular in the fight against hunger.

The fight against world hunger cannot be separated from the need to curb the harmful effects of climate change, particularly on food security and nutrition. Countries participating in the COP21 negotiations must bear this in mind.

Once only a dream, a world free of hunger is now within our reach. We have the technology, and we know what policies and actions work best, to produce enough food. But climate change stands in the way of achieving these goals.

Global warming affects food production, reducing staple crop yields; by 2050, these are expected to drop by 10-25 percent in many or most parts of the world. Meanwhile, droughts, floods, rising sea levels and hurricanes are striking with more frequency and ferocity, increasingly threatening the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable. Such climate-related disasters contribute heavily to economic losses and population displacement. At the same time, the world population continues to grow. And it is growing fastest in the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

Climate change is undermining the livelihoods and food security of the world's poor, 80 percent of whom live in rural areas and depend on agriculture, forestry and fisheries. We need a global framework to support development and growth while conserving our planet's natural resources, particularly in rural areas. The SDGs are a central part of this framework. To complement this framework, countries are coming together in Paris to negotiate a new, global climate agreement which hinges on limiting the increase in global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's overarching goal is food sufficiency and security for all, which remains firmly at the center of the climate change debate. Countries must be able to both implement solutions and scale up adaptation and mitigation actions. To this end, the Paris framework needs to support technology transfer, capacity development and finance mobilization.

These efforts will benefit everyone. In particular we must strengthen the livelihoods of small farmers, fishers and foresters who are most threatened by lack of food and stand to suffer most during food shortages—more so those in small, developing island-states and landlocked countries, as well as those in arid and semi-arid areas. For them, adaptation is synonymous with ensuring food security. Farmers, fishers and foresters—be they large-scale or small-scale operators, be they in developed or developing countries—are more than food producers. They are custodians of the Earth and, as such, help steward our natural resources on behalf of us all. They are thus central to the solution and cannot be made to bear alone the burden and the cost of dealing with the effects of climate change.

In the face of climate change, FAO is committed to contribute its technical expertise and experience to support people, especially those in rural areas, in their efforts to break out of the cycle of hunger and poverty.

Strong partnerships are the foundation for sharing knowledge on development issues and resources. Now is the time to forge these partnerships. Only through close cooperation can we ensure that the progress we have made in food security is not compromised by the impacts of climate change.

It is imperative that we get our priorities right and put food security first. We must recognize that the agricultural sectors, including livestock, forest and fisheries—on which most of the world's poor depend—and climate change are closely intertwined, and it is important that solutions regarding one should also benefit the other.

Simply put, achieving food security and adequate nutrition for all in our growing world population, given a changing climate and our limited resources, means that we have to learn to produce more with less.

This is a call to action.

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