

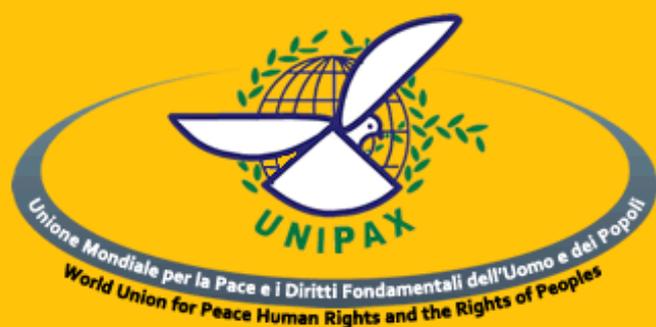


World Union for Peace Human Rights and the Rights of People

NGO associated to the Un Department of Public Information

NEWSLETTER

From Un to Citizen International News



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Thanks for the kind cooperation to UNRIC - United Nations - Regional Information Centre in Brussels - and the Desk Office for Italy, San Marino, Malta and the Holy See

Merry 30th Anniversary to UNIPAX!

“A NEW HUMANISM FOR A NEW RENAISSANCE” PROJECT

This year **UNIPAX** celebrates its 30th anniversary. During this period UNIPAX has worked in voluntary and social utility activities mainly in favour of peace, civil coexistence, fundamental Human and Peoples rights and their implementation. (see [Wikipedia entry UNIPAX](#))

The anniversary offers to UNIPAX the possibility of launching a new and more effective series of activities starting from the global project drawn by its founder Orazio Parisotto through the essay "**The Global Revolution for a New Humanism - The way out of the global emergencies**" (see www.unipax.org). On this occasion **we send, for free**, to you and to more than 100,000 organizations of all continents the **abstract** that allows a conscious participation to the project.

UNIPAX, thanks to its social and cultural commitment, has always been active in European Union, globalization and peace education. We believe that the great mankind problems should be faced with continental and global democratic supranational institutions able to address them.

The activities were carried out in constant support to the UN and in particular through active cooperation with the UN DPI and with its Regional Offices.

On June 5th, 2015 will be held the celebratory meeting: "**New Renaissance for a New Humanism**" in **Florence at Palazzo Bellini - Lungarno Soderini, 5** - broadcasted in the website Unipax. On this occasion will be presented the new website - www.unipax.org

UN Observatory

For developing countries, new opportunities in geothermal energy

New report explores uses of natural heat for food production and processing

7 April 2015, Rome -- Geothermal energy, the flow of heat energy radiating from the earth's core, provides unique opportunities for cost efficient, sustainable food production and processing in developing countries, says a new report published by FAO today.

In some developing economies, as much as half of all food produced is lost post-harvest – that's due in part to a lack of affordable energy for food processing, according to [“Uses of Geothermal Energy in Food and Agriculture”](#).

This makes the use of heat energy for drying foods, pasteurizing milk and sterilizing produce especially interesting for developing countries, where increased food processing can give a boost to food security.

Food drying can prolong the shelf life of nutritious foods like fish and vegetables and make them available year-round, including in times of drought.

Geothermal energy is also a prime source for heating greenhouses, soils, and water for fish farming, the report says.

Developing countries that have much to gain from harnessing heat energy for agriculture include those in the so-called Ring of Fire along the Pacific Plate, such as Mexico, Indonesia, the Philippines and various countries along the Pacific Coast of South America. So do Ethiopia and Kenya in Africa's Rift Valley, and transitioning economies in Eastern Europe, including Romania and Macedonia.

The case for geothermal

“It's an energy source that's renewable, clean and low-cost once you've made the initial investment to harness it,” says Carlos da Silva, Senior Agribusiness Economist in FAO's [Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division](#).

“By using a clean energy source, you're not only addressing cost but also the environmental impacts of food production and processing,” according to da Silva.

Agriculture both consumes energy and emits greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

Research suggests that using geothermal heating for greenhouses decreases fungus infections and cuts fuel costs by up to 80 percent, providing significant savings to operating budgets.

And while oil and gas can be costly and scarcely available in parts of the world, the estimated 42 million megawatts (MW) of power that radiates from the earth's 5000-degrees-celsius core won't run out for billions of years.

“Geothermal energy for agriculture can be done even at small-scales and can significantly contribute to income generation, providing employment and improving food and nutrition security in developing countries,” adds Divine Njie, AGS Deputy Director and co-editor of the report.

From electricity to agriculture

Worldwide, 38 countries currently use geothermal energy for direct application in agricultural production and some 24 countries harness it to generate electricity, with Iceland, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Kenya, New Zealand and the Philippines deriving more than 10 percent of their electricity needs from natural heat sources.

Of the 23 developing countries that are using geothermal, the majority currently apply it to space heating and recreational purposes like bathing only, leaving its significant potential for agricultural uses untapped.

Still, successful geothermal agricultural projects are underway in just under half of those countries, including in aquaculture, farming and processing.

Success stories

A government-funded project in Algeria is supporting the building of fish farms that utilize hot water from drill holes to heat Tilapia ponds. The three farms built so far produce an average 1700 tonnes of Tilapia per year.

Iceland – which derives most of its heating and electricity from geothermal power -- has been a leader in the use of geothermal power for agriculture since the 1920s. In addition to greenhouse heating, some 20 companies across Iceland dry between 2000 and 4000 tonnes of fish each year, while an emerging industry for geothermal pet food drying is currently producing 500 tonnes of animal feed annually.

Challenges

Start-up costs remain the main barrier to developing countries' exploring geothermal energy uses on a larger scale, making it all the more necessary for governments to take a leading role in attracting investment and creating policy environments that support the sector, according to FAO.

"You can invest in ground proofs and not find any economically viable heat sources," says da Silva, adding that even in successful cases, selling energy at a low cost can be a challenge when having to recover start-up costs.

Nevertheless, various projects outlined in the FAO report show that these obstacles are not insurmountable and investments worth exploring in the larger effort of making agriculture

more sustainable. Indeed, "the FAO report also shows that there are direct-use opportunities which do not require high-cost exploration and exploitation", says Njie.

An example of geothermal energy use: Drying chillies and garlic in Thailand

Chillies and garlic are highly popular in Thailand, where people eat them both fresh and dried. In one project there, waste heat from a geothermal power plant is being used to dry these important food products in compartments that can hold 450 kg of chillies or 220 kg of garlic at a time. The required air temperatures are 70 °C for chillies and 50 °C for garlic. The total energy consumed is just 13.3 megajoules per kilogram of water evaporated for chillies, and 1.5 mj/kg of water for garlic. This type of dryer has relatively low running costs and can be used in any weather conditions.

Millions of Yemenis face food insecurity amidst escalating conflict

More than \$8 million needed to support farmers during crucial cropping season

15 April 2015, Rome - Amidst escalating conflict at a crucial time in the country's cropping season, almost 11 million people in Yemen are severely food insecure and millions more are at risk of not meeting their basic food needs, FAO said today.

According to the organization's latest [assessment](#), increasing conflict in nearly all major towns across the country is disrupting markets and trade, driving up local food prices and hampering agricultural production, including land preparation and planting for the 2015 maize and sorghum harvests. 10.6 million Yemenis are now severely food insecure, of which 4.8 million are facing "emergency" conditions, suffering from severe lack of food access, very high and increasing malnutrition, and irreversible destruction of livelihoods. Around 850,000 children are acutely malnourished. More than half of Yemen's population – some 16 million out of a total of 26 million— is in need of some form of humanitarian aid and has no access to safe water.

The latest escalation of conflicts is expected to further increase food insecurity in the poverty-stricken country. Paradoxically, some 2.5 million food producers, including farmers, pastoralists, fishermen and agricultural wage labourers, are among those identified as food insecure.

“We are entering a crucial period for crop production in Yemen and now, more than ever, agriculture cannot be an afterthought if we want to prevent more people from becoming food insecure amidst this crisis,” said FAO Representative for Yemen, Salah Haja Hassan. Governorates in the far Northeast and South are most severely affected by food insecurity.

Market disruption

In some areas, like the western port city of Hodeidah, food prices have doubled and fuel prices have quadrupled. Further increases are expected as a result of fuel shortages and the impact of civil unrest on imports and transportation networks across Yemen. While agriculture provides the livelihood of nearly two-thirds of Yemenis, the country also relies heavily on imports of staple crops. At the same time, service infrastructure has collapsed and government safety net programs have been suspended, handing an extra blow to millions of poor households.

Critical work in Yemen

In a very challenging field environment, FAO [and partners](#) have since 2014 been working to support local farmers and internally displaced people to strengthen their livelihoods by distributing crop production packages, home gardening kits and fisheries inputs. They have also provided vaccinated poultry and goats for backyard livestock production.

Additional animal vaccination drives and plant health campaigns have helped farmers protect their agricultural assets, such as livestock and trees, from disease and locust threats.

Since 2014, more than 90,000 people (13,450 families) have benefited from these FAO programs. Security conditions permitting, the Organization aims to reach nearly 235,000 people through its 2014-15 response plan for Yemen, but more funding is needed. Currently, only \$4 million of the required \$12 million have been made available for the livelihood programs.

“Even before fighting intensified this spring, Yemenis were in dire need of support to build up their agricultural production,” said Abdessalam Ould Ahmed, FAO Assistant Director-General for North Africa and the Near East. “The deteriorating situation means we need to double down on our efforts to ensure that as many farmers as possible are able to plant this growing season and strengthen their ability to withstand future shocks.”

Healthy soils are the foundation of food production

Global Soil Week opens with emphasis on soils for development

20 April 2015, Rome - Healthy soils are the foundation of global food production and ought to become a key agenda item in public policy, said Moujahed Achouri, Director of FAO's Land and Water Division, addressing the third [Global Soil Week](#) in Berlin today. Global Soil Week brings together more than 550 participants from 78 countries working on sustainable soil management and land governance.

“Soils are essential for achieving food security and nutrition and have the potential to help mitigate the negative impacts of climate change,” said Achouri, who added that pressures on soil resources are reaching critical limits.

In addition to sustaining 95 percent of food production, soils host more than a quarter of the planet's biodiversity, are a major source of pharmaceuticals, and play a critical role in the carbon cycle, he added.

At the same time, the level of soil degradation – estimated at 33 percent globally – is “alarming” and has the potential to threaten food security and send many people into poverty, Achouri said.

Sustainable soil management, in turn, can contribute to the production of more and healthier food. FAO called on the international soil community and policy makers to work together to reduce soil degradation and restore already degraded land.

Global spotlight on soils

Global Soil Week 2015 coincides with the [International Year of Soils](#), which aims to raise awareness about often-unrecognized benefits of soils to human health and sustainable development.

This year's Soil Week, highlights the need for including soil issues in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are currently being discussed.

“If humanity's overarching need for food security and nutrition, climate change mitigation and sustainable development is to be met, soil resources have to be given the global attention they deserve,” said Achouri.

Dramatic impact of climate change on people's lives demands response

Director-General briefs Italian politicians on Paris summit, says poor can't be asked to pick up the climate change bill

23 April 2015, Rome -A strong and collective effort is needed to tackle climate change, which is already having direct and "tragic" consequences for people's lives, FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva told Italian lawmakers.

Climate-related factors are contributing to intensified food insecurity for many of the world's most vulnerable people -- worsening situations that were already quite dramatic, he said.

"When agriculture does not have the chance to bloom, and when food is scarce, the consequences can be dramatic," according to Graziano da Silva.

"Hunger can force people to leave families and homes in search of better opportunities that they do not always find. The loss of lives in the Mediterranean is a tragic reminder of this," the FAO Director-General said.

Similarly, the recent tropical storms in the Philippines and Vanuatu showed how quickly food crops can be destroyed by severe weather events, while recurrent droughts have an equally deadly effect, he noted.

Speaking in the Italian Parliament with Italy's Environment Minister Gian Luca Galletti present, Graziano da Silva explained that FAO is especially concerned with climate change due its clear connections to food security and agriculture.

"Climate change affects agricultural production and might change the geography of food production," he said. The agricultural sector is itself a producer of greenhouse gas emissions, but also has the potential to sequester more carbon in soils and forests if sustainable production and management policies are adopted, he added.

The world needs a paradigm shift to more sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems, which will entail making farming techniques less reliant on intensive use of inputs and natural resources.

The road to Paris

"In 2015 we need to transform political commitment into actions and results," Graziano da Silva said, referring to this year's diplomatic agenda, which includes a new set of Sustainable Development Goals and the December Conference of the Parties (COP) summit organized by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

"That includes ensuring the necessary funding to cover the cost of transition to food systems that mitigate and adapt, that are more sustainable and resilient to climate change," he said. Adaptation to and mitigation of climate-change trends is a collective interest, but "we cannot present the bill to family farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in developing countries," he stressed.

And while boosting rural incomes in developing countries is a priority, richer nations also need to tackle food waste, he said, saying affluent consumers waste around 222 million tons of food every year, almost as much as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa.

Graziano da Silva hailed Italy for hosting this year's food-focused Expo in Milan, which is expected to promote the importance of food security, climate change and sustainable government. "FAO stands ready to develop a strategic partnership with the Italian government" in preparation for the COP summit.

Private Sector Forum on Food Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Region. Barcelona, Spain, 5-6 May

Barcelona, 5-6 May - How can increasing cooperation between the public and private sectors contribute to promoting a sustainable, regional approach for agriculture and food security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean?

To look at these and related issues, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) are organizing a high-level forum in Barcelona on 5-6 May 2015 (Headquarters of the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean – Palacio de Pedralbes Avenida Diagonal 686) that will bring together policymakers, financing institutions and CEOs from leading agribusiness companies, to deepen relationships between the public and private sector and develop initiatives to increase agricultural investment in the region.

Co-chaired by FAO's Assistant Director General, Laurent Thomas, EBRD's President, Suma Chakrabarti, and UfM's Secretary General, Fathallah Sijilmassi, the forum will address challenging policy and investments dilemmas -- from self-sufficiency to trade liberalization; from traditional value chains to innovative food quality paradigms -- by exploring:

- best practices for advancing regional integration
- developing strategies for financing food import bills
- improving the efficiency of import supply chains through private sector engagement
- focusing on advantageous agricultural exports
- achieving more efficient use of resources in production processes
- supporting local producers to create higher value products through quality

The UN @ Expo 2015

"UN Itinerary" spread across the expo site will allow visitors to explore diverse themes in-depth

Some 145 countries – representing 94 percent of the world's population – will participate in Expo Milano 2015 (1 May-31 October 2015) as well as numerous stakeholders from civil

society and the private sector, many of whom partner the UN and its agencies in development projects and programmes around the world.

The theme of Expo Milano 2015 "Feeding the planet, Energy for life" links strongly with the UN's mission to fight global hunger, malnutrition and poverty. As such, Expo Milano 2015 offers the UN an excellent opportunity to showcase its work related to addressing these critical issues and foster a public dialogue.

A "UN Itinerary" spread across the Expo site will allow visitors to explore how the UN systems is working across the globe to promote sustainable development and combat hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

The Zero Hunger Challenge: United for a sustainable world

Is it possible to ensure that all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and sustainable food? This is the question that will open and challenge the World Exposition in Milan in 2015. A question that was answered in a definitive manner by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon when he launched the "Zero Hunger Challenge": we can eliminate hunger in our lifetime.

Launched in 2012 during the Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, The "Zero Hunger Challenge" presents the vision of a world free from hunger, where at the same time, it is possible to face the growing demand for food and meet new environmental challenges head on.

Expo Milano 2015 falls in a crucial year for the United Nations: not only will we review overall progress in meeting the Millenium Development Goals (the first of which is to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger), the new Post-2015 Development Agenda will also be adopted. Expo Milano's theme, "feeding the planet, energy for life" will provide an ideal opportunity to foster dialogue and raise public awareness about food security and nutrition, rural development and the sustainable management of natural resources. In order to maximize this impact, the UN has chosen the theme "The Zero Hunger Challenge · United for a sustainable world", to make visitors understand that together we can build a world where everyone has access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food, and can lead a healthy and productive life without compromising the needs of future generations.

The challenge was not envisioned as a plan but rather as a call to action: eradicating world hunger is a goal that concerns everyone. The objective of our presence at Expo Milano 2015 is to ensure that when discussing food and food production, the catastrophe of 805 million people who still suffer from hunger is not forgotten or left unmentioned.

At least one in nine people worldwide go to bed hungry each day including over 160 million children who are stunted. Children who will not be able to develop and learn at the same rate as their peers who were properly nourished in the first fundamental one thousand days of life.

This is a scandal that to many seems destined to last, while in reality it can end.

When talking about hunger, the only acceptable number is zero. In order to achieve this goal, the Zero Hunger Challenge has proposed five objectives or pillars:

1. Zero stunted children under 2 years of age
2. 100 percent access to adequate food all year round
3. 100 percent access to adequate food all year round
4. All food systems are sustainable
5. 100 percent increase in smallholder productivity and income
6. Zero loss or waste of food.

An integral part of all five pillars, we have chosen to highlight the issue of women's empowerment considering the fundamental role that they play in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

In many countries, women represent the backbone of the agricultural sector and food systems and make up the bulk of the work force in the primary sector. Women also play a key role in guaranteeing food security for the whole family: when women suffer from hunger and malnutrition, so do their children. Over 19 million children are born underweight each year. This is often a consequence of their mothers' inadequate nutrition before and during pregnancy.

Despite this, around 60 per cent of those who suffer from chronic hunger are women. This is due to the fact that women often do not have equal access to resources, education and income generation along with having a minor role in decision-making.

Learn more:

[The UN @ Expo 2015: Answers to FAQs](http://www.un-expo.org/en)

<http://www.un-expo.org/en>

Nepal Earthquake's impact on food security and agriculture likely very high

FAO calls for \$8 million to help farmers

30 April 2015, Rome-- Some \$8 million is urgently needed to help disaster-struck Nepalese farmers rapidly recover lost agricultural inputs and resume preparations for the imminent rice sowing season, FAO said today.

The impact of the recent major earthquake on food security and agricultural livelihoods expected to be very high.

Farmers who miss the planting season that is expected to start late May onwards will be unable to harvest rice – the country's staple food -- again until late 2016. This, together with likely losses of food stocks and wheat and maize harvests, would severely limit food supplies and incomes in the South Asian country, where around two-thirds of people rely on agriculture for their livelihood, FAO said.

Last week, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake – the country's biggest in 80 years – shook Nepal, killing thousands while limiting access to food and leaving some 3.5 million in need of food assistance.

Agricultural areas among worst hit

An estimated 8 million people across the country's Western and Central Regions are affected by the disaster, including its largest cities, Kathmandu and Pokhara.

But some of the country's most vulnerable agricultural areas, particularly the villages in mountain and hilly regions, also bore the brunt.

Although damage to the agriculture sector has not yet been assessed, affected families have likely lost livestock, crops, food stocks and valuable agricultural inputs. At the same time, the disaster has destroyed markets and infrastructure, including roads and crucial irrigation and drainage canals. As a result, internal trade, including the movement of emergency assistance, is severely constrained.

Before the earthquake hit, FAO estimated Nepal's wheat production in 2015 at 1.8 million tonnes – some 5 percent below last year's record harvest. But crop damage and farmer's inability to harvest in earthquake-affected areas are likely to change this forecast. In addition, disruption of planting operations for rice and maize may severely reduce the planted area for these crops in the most affected areas.

Critical window of opportunity

In addition to distributing crop-production packages to secure this year's harvest, FAO and partners will support the Nepalese government in preventing further loss of livestock by

providing animal feed and veterinary supplies that will ensure animals stay healthy and productive for families relying on them for food and income.

In all, FAO will support 20.000 of the most vulnerable farming households protect and rebuild their livelihoods. Timely agricultural interventions are essential to increase the resilience of affected farming families and greatly reduce the time and cost of recovery.

"There is a critical window of opportunity to help crop producers plant in time to have a rice harvest this year and regain their self-sufficiency," said Somsak Pipoppinyo, FAO Representative in Nepal. "At the same time, we need to do all we can to preserve vital livestock assets which provide affected families with much needed income and nutrition."

UN agencies and partners launched a \$415 million [emergency appeal](#) for Nepal to address the most urgent needs. FAO's appeal is part of a larger \$128-million request under the [Food Security Cluster](#), led by FAO and the World Food Programme. In addition to emergency agriculture support, the cluster aims to distribute 50.000 tonnes of food to families in need, along with setting up cash-transfer programmes and helping communities rebuild.

FAO, EBRD and UFM seek to boost food security in the Mediterranean region

Unleashing public and private investment to enhance agricultural production and improve food security essential for the southern and eastern Mediterranean

5 May 2015, Barcelona - Boosting sustainable agricultural production and trade is one of the main priorities for the southern and eastern rim of the Mediterranean, where most countries produce insufficient quantities of food staples.

For this reason, the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) (FAO), the [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#) (EBRD) and the [Union for the Mediterranean](#) (UfM) co-organised the "[Private Sector Forum on Food Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Region](#)", a two-day conference (5-6 May) to deepen relationships between the public and private sector - from farmers and their organisations to small, medium and large agribusiness enterprises - and to develop initiatives to increase investment in agricultural and food systems.

Opened by Carlos Cabanas Godino, Secretary General at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment in Spain, the Forum has gathered high-level policy-makers, financial institutions and representatives from the private sector, research centres and academia.

The Forum offers the opportunity to discuss how the public and private sectors can collaborate to bolster food security in the region by enabling sustainable private investment in a region characterised by population growth, natural-resource constraints and a structural deficit in the production of staple foods.

Trade flows are growing

The countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean region import half of their basic crops. Imports of agricultural food products to the region have risen by \$69 billion, or 63 percent, between 2002 and 2013. Meanwhile, exports have risen fivefold since 2000, to \$31 billion, including dramatic increases in fruit and vegetable shipments to the Middle East and North African markets.

In 2013 the region imported 29 million tonnes of wheat. It is increasingly dependent on imports for key staples such as grains, sugar and vegetable oil, which supply the majority of calories consumed. Furthermore, moving grain from port to mill can cost up to four times more than the global standard, due to slow turnaround times for vessels, storage costs, and high product losses.

This high demand for basic food products is mainly due to rapid population growth in a region which has limited and fragile natural resources - in particular, land and water - and an acute vulnerability to climate change. The region also suffers from under-investment in agriculture and insufficient private sector participation.

During the Forum, participants will examine ways to tackle these challenges. Discussions will focus on how to boost local production of fruit and vegetables for export; further diversify import suppliers and export markets; enhance procurement policies supplemented by well-designed strategic-reserve policies; better structure food value chains; increase investment in

research and development; and make import processes cheaper. Furthermore, stronger regional integration of agricultural markets would help countries cope with supply shocks and would mitigate changes in food prices.

At the Forum, EBRD Vice President Philippe le Houérou noted: "In recent years, food security has become one of the EBRD's priorities. A dynamic, competitive and inclusive agribusiness industry, driven by private sector participation, can be a powerful force to promote food security. In the next three years, the EBRD aims to invest over €300 million in the region's agribusinesses, from SMEs and family farms to larger agro-processing companies, to reinforce the private sector role in enhancing food security. We are also combining our efforts to put in place policies that encourage investment, to build more efficient import value chains, and to encourage more inter- and intra-regional trade, which will help achieve this potential."

Southern and eastern Mediterranean countries could shift from a model in which they seek to meet all of their own food needs, to an agricultural self-reliance model based on using comparative advantages. Under this model, export earnings generated by food products appropriate to the region are used to purchase imports of food goods that are not suited for local production.

Making the most of valuable water

While the Mediterranean region is an ancient agricultural heartland, it faces growing constraints on natural resources. Its population on the Southern and Eastern rim is expected to grow significantly, reaching 360 million by 2030. At the same time, climate-change forecasts suggest that precipitation levels in the region could decline by 10 to 40 percent by 2050.

"To become as efficient as possible, investments in the agricultural sector must make the best use of scarce natural resources in the region. For example, every drop of water has to be used with extreme care and to generate the highest possible value," said Laurent Thomas, FAO Assistant Director-General for Technical Cooperation.

He further noted: "FAO is active in providing policy and technical advice to member countries dealing with water scarcity as a corporate priority for the region, and I praise all actors investing in water-saving technologies. Other FAO priorities for the region include building resilience for food security and nutrition and supporting small-scale agriculture for inclusive development."

A forthcoming FAO analysis will show that natural-resource constraints support the region's comparative advantage in growing higher-value crops such as olives and other fruit and vegetables. Higher export levels of products in which the region enjoys a comparative advantage would also help cushion the effects of potential global food-price inflation such as the increases that shook much of the region in 2008.

Mobilising all private players, mapping priority initiatives

Although agriculture in the region is increasingly dynamic, it is also characterised by a myriad of smallholders and small rural enterprises. This profile poses a particular challenge for policy-makers.

"Youth employment is a burning issue in the region. We see agriculture as part of the solution because it can generate sustainable sources of income and jobs in rural areas," said UfM Secretary-General Fathallah Sijilmassi. "Small producers and enterprises should be properly included in agricultural food chains." He also noted that this Forum falls within the UfM strategy for private-sector development as a driving force to foster regional integration in the Mediterranean region.

As experience shows, agricultural economic growth is most effective when it is inclusive, allowing smallholders access to credit and market opportunities. Participants explored the role that cooperatives can play in procuring key inputs, and agreed that the domestic private sector can bring an array of innovative solutions to the region's food security equation.

To help realise that potential, FAO, the EBRD and the UfM have reiterated their willingness to ensure that the voices of the private-sector and farmers' organisations are heard in policy forums at regional and national levels.

Complementing the EBRD's promise of investment, the institutions are committed to mobilising technical assistance that can support policy platforms.

These platforms would consider issues such as Egypt's grain import infrastructure, Tunisia's olive oil sector, Morocco's horticultural sector, the role of cooperatives, as well as water-efficient technologies and agricultural practices across the region.

International days

World Autism Awareness Day (2 April 2015)

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for World Autism Awareness Day, observed on 2 April:

I am hugely encouraged by the growing public awareness of autism spectrum disorders and the increase of public services to many of those affected. World Autism Awareness Day not only fosters greater understanding, it empowers parents into seeking early intervention therapies and calls for the full integration of persons with autism into society. It also invites policymakers to encourage schools to open their doors to students with autism. With adequate support, they can — and should — be educated in the heart of their communities. Now is the time for even greater access and work opportunities for persons with autism.

This year, I am pleased to launch an employment "Call to Action", inviting businesses to make concrete commitments to employ people on the autism spectrum. We encourage public offices, corporations and small businesses to have a closer look at the way they perceive people with autism, to take the time to learn about the condition and to create life-changing opportunities.

People with autism have enormous potential. Most have remarkable visual, artistic or academic skills. Thanks to the use of assistive technologies, non-verbal persons with autism can communicate and share their hidden capabilities. Recognizing the talents of persons on the autism spectrum, rather than focusing on their weaknesses, is essential to creating a society that is truly inclusive.

Yet, even where autism awareness is most advanced, more than 80 per cent of adults with autism are unemployed. That is why it is so important for employers to understand their unique and often exceptional skills, and to enable work environments where they can excel.

This important mission can only be achieved with appropriate vocational training and adequate support alongside a recruitment process that can allow people to successfully integrate into workforces around the world.

The United Nations General Assembly has called for greater access and opportunities for persons with autism. In declaring 2 April as World Autism Awareness Day, the Assembly also called for training for public administrators, service providers, caregivers, families and non-professionals to support the integration of persons with autism into society, so that they can realize their full potential.

On World Autism Awareness Day, let us join forces to create the best possible conditions for those with autism, so that they can make their own contribution to a future that is fair and sustainable for all.

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (6 April 2015)

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, observed today:

The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace highlights the role sport can play in achieving sustainable progress and change.

Sport has the power to help develop the potential of individuals, communities and nations. It encourages personal growth, is a major force in eliminating gender barriers and can build bridges across lines that might otherwise divide.

Sport nurtures society by creating a culture in which fundamental values, such as equality, the acceptance of rules, mutual respect and fairness, are appreciated.

It helps the more vulnerable groups in society, especially young people and persons with disabilities, to enjoy their human rights, including safe opportunities to engage in physical education programmes and sporting activities. This contributes to their inclusion in society and increases their motivation to attend school.

The sporting industry, for its part, has a significant role to play in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices.

I commend athletes across the world for supporting the United Nations in our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. There have been many remarkable gains, but there remains much to do.

As we prepare a new development agenda for the period beyond the year 2015, including a set of sustainable development goals, I will continue to look to sportsmen and women to be advocates for building a better world for all.

On this International Day, let us pledge to strengthen the role that sport plays in communities around the world. We need to have everyone on the team: Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and many others.

Let us use sport to help create a healthier, happier and more prosperous world for all.

World Health Day (7 April 2015)

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's message for World Health Day, observed on 7 April:

Food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemicals is responsible for more than 200 diseases, ranging from diarrhoea to cancers. Potential new threats to food safety are emerging all the time. Changes to the way food is produced, distributed and consumed, the

emergence of resistant bacteria and increases in travel and trade make it difficult to manage pathogens and contaminants once they are in our food supply.

Unsafe food is a largely under-reported and often overlooked global problem. With the food supply chain stretching around the world, the need to strengthen food safety systems within and among countries is becoming more critical. That is why, on World Health Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on countries and all actors to improve food safety from farm to plate and everywhere in between.

The production of safe food is important for economies. It fosters trade and tourism and supports food security and sustainable development. Food safety is also important for education. Sick children miss school and it is at school that the next generation of consumers can learn basic food safety practices.

WHO and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) work together to set international standards for safe food. They assess the safety of new food technologies and help countries to

prevent, detect and respond to outbreaks of food-borne disease. These agencies also help countries build their own capacity to predict and manage food-borne disease risks. All people involved in the production, distribution and preparation of food must play their part to make food safe. Governments must communicate the importance of food safety to their citizens. The health, agriculture, trade and environment sectors need to work together. On World Health Day, let us all ask: how safe is our food? We all have a role to play in keeping food safe from farm to plate.

World Malaria Day (25 April 2015)

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for World Malaria Day, observed on 25 April:

Last year, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the rate at which people are dying from malaria has fallen by almost half since the beginning of this century.

One reason for this substantial improvement is the increased availability of insecticide-treated bed nets. In 2013 — the most recent year for which we have statistics — almost half of all people at risk of malaria in sub-Saharan Africa had access to an insecticide-treated net, up from just 3 per cent in 2004.

It is also because of massively improved access to accurate malaria diagnostics and effective treatment. In 2013, the number of rapid diagnostic tests procured globally increased to 319 million, up from 46 million in 2008. The same year, 392 million courses of artemisinin-based combination therapies — a key intervention to treat malaria — were procured, up from 11 million in 2005.

As a result, fewer people are becoming infected with malaria, and more people are getting the medicines they need. This tremendous achievement is clear proof that we can win the global fight against malaria. We have the tools and the know-how. But, we still need to invest in getting these tools to a lot more people if we are to further reduce the number of people becoming ill with malaria, and further cut the number of people who die each year.

We urgently need to get insecticide-treated nets to all people at risk in sub-Saharan Africa — not just half of them. We must address the recent decline in indoor residual spraying, another key intervention for reducing new infections. And we have to do more to for the millions of people who cannot get tested and treated for malaria. We must also move more decisively to tackle insecticide and drug resistance.

This means investing more in tried and tested approaches to malaria prevention and treatment, strengthening health systems in the world's poorest countries, and intensifying efforts to develop new tools and approaches.

On World Malaria Day 2015, I call on the international community to "invest in the future: defeat malaria". We have a real opportunity to defeat this terrible disease. Let's not waste it.

European Union

ENVIRONMENT

Parliament supports shift towards advanced biofuels

A draft law to cap crop-derived biofuel production and accelerate the shift to alternative sources was voted by Parliament on Tuesday. It aims to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused by the growing use of farm land for biofuel crops.

First-generation biofuels under scrutiny

Current legislation requires EU member states to ensure that renewable energy accounts for at least 10% of energy consumption in transport by 2020. The new law says that:

- first-generation biofuels (from crops grown on agricultural land) should account for no more than 7% of energy consumption in transport by 2020,
- fuel suppliers must report to EU countries and the EU Commission the estimated level of GHG emissions caused by “indirect land-use change” (ILUC), i.e. freeing up more to grow food crops, in order to offset that switched to biofuel production,
- The Commission must report and publish data on ILUC-related emissions, and
- The Commission must report back to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on the scope for including ILUC emission figures in the existing sustainability criteria.

Boosting advanced biofuels

EU member states will have to set a national target, no later than 18 months after the EU directive enters into force, for the share of advanced biofuels, e.g. those sourced from certain types of waste and residues and new sources such as seaweed, in total transport consumption.

Next steps

Member states must enact the legislation by 2017.

MEPs clamp down on wasteful use of plastic carrier bags

EU countries will be required to reduce the use of the commonest and most polluting plastic bags drastically under new rules voted by Parliament on Tuesday.

Binding reduction targets

EU member states will be able to choose:

- either to take measures to reduce annual average consumption of non-biodegradable plastic bags to 90 lightweight bags per citizen by the end of 2019 and 40 by the end of 2025
- or ensure that by the end of 2018, no more light plastic bags are handed over free of charge to shoppers.

Furthermore, the European Commission is required to assess the impact on the environment of oxo-degradable plastic materials, which fragment into small particles, and propose suitable

measures. By 2017, the European Commission will have to propose labelling and marking measures for an EU-wide recognition of biodegradable and compostable plastic bags.

Ships' CO2 emissions: MEPs adopt new reporting rules

Draft EU rules requiring ship owners using EU ports to monitor and report CO2 emissions each year received the support of the House on Tuesday. The new rules, already informally agreed with the Council of Ministers, will apply from 2018 on to ships over 5,000 gross tons, regardless of the country in which they are registered, as a first step towards cutting their greenhouse gas emissions.

The text establishes an EU-wide system for monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) of greenhouse gas emissions from shipping, in order to improve the information about ship efficiency and emissions and to encourage reducing emissions and fuel consumption.

The MRV requirements will apply to CO2 emissions arising from voyages to, from and between EU ports. All ships over 5,000 gross tons will be covered, with the exception of:

- fishing vessels (catching and/or processing),
- warships,
- naval auxiliaries,
- wooden ships of a primitive build,
- ships not propelled by mechanical means, and
- government ships used for non-commercial purposes.

Reducing the administrative burden on companies

The plans also aim to minimize the administrative burden on companies and make the measurements as accurate as possible. Ship efficiency - measured in relation to the amount of cargo carried – will have to be reported for all categories of ships. However, detailed specific rules were introduced for each ship category.

Where an owner's report on ship emissions meets the requirements, an independent verifier should deliver a document certifying compliance. Ships will have to carry these documents on board and will be subject to inspection by EU member states, who will also establish penalties for infringements.

INDUSTRY

Automatic emergency call devices in all new car models from spring 2018

Emergency call devices that automatically alert rescue services to car crashes (eCall) will have to be fitted to all new models of cars and light vans by 31 March 2018 under rules voted by European Parliament on Tuesday. Road accidents took 25,700 lives in the EU in 2014 – a death toll that the new devices could cut by an estimated 10% a year.

The eCall in-vehicle system uses 112 emergency call technology to alert the emergency services to serious road accidents automatically. This enables them to decide immediately on the type and size of rescue operation needed, which in turn helps them to arrive faster, save lives, reduce the severity of injuries and cut the cost of traffic jams.

Data privacy: no vehicle tracking

MEPs strengthened the draft law's data protection clause to preclude tracking of eCall-equipped vehicle before the accident occurs. Under the new rules, the automatic call would give the emergency services only basic minimum data, such as the type of vehicle, the fuel used, the time of the accident, the exact location and the number of passengers.

The rules say eCall data gathered by emergency centres or their service partners must not be transferred to third parties without explicit consent of the person concerned. Manufacturers will

also have to ensure that the eCall technology design permits full and permanent deletion of data gathered.

Ready from spring 2018

All new models of passenger cars and light commercial vehicles will have to be equipped with the eCall system as of 31 March 2018. MEPs also secured an obligation for the European Commission to assess, in the three years after spring 2018, whether eCall devices should be included in other vehicles, such as buses, coaches or trucks.

These new rules set out obligations for car manufacturers. Separate rules, governing the infrastructure that EU member states must put in place by 1 October 2017 to process eCalls, entered into force at the end of June 2014.

Next step

Parliament's vote ends the EU legislative procedure. The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day after its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

IMMIGRATION

Migration: Parliament calls for urgent measures to save lives

The EU should do everything possible to prevent further loss of life at sea, e.g. by expanding the mandate of "Triton" operation in the Mediterranean to include "search and rescue operations at EU level", says a resolution voted by Parliament on Wednesday. MEPs also call for a binding quota for distributing asylum seekers among all EU countries, bigger contributions to resettlement programmes, better cooperation with third countries and tougher measures against people smugglers.

Parliament urges the EU and its member states to establish a clear mandate for Triton, "so as to expand its area of operation and increase its mandate for search and rescue operations at EU level" (Triton is coordinated by the EU border agency Frontex and currently extends only 30 nautical miles from the Italian coastline).

The EU and its member states should ensure that "search and rescue obligations are effectively fulfilled", stresses the resolution, which was approved by 449 votes to 130, with 93 abstentions.

Parliament calls for "a robust and permanent humanitarian European rescue operation, which, like Mare Nostrum, would operate on the high seas and to which all member states would

contribute financially and with equipment and assets". MEPs urge the EU to co-fund such an operation.

EU countries should also continue to show solidarity and commitment by stepping up their contributions to the budgets and operations of Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), MEPs add. Parliament also undertakes to provide these agencies with the resources (human and equipment) needed to fulfil their obligations "through the EU budget and its relevant funds".

Stepping up solidarity and responsibility-sharing among EU countries

Parliament regrets that the 23 April European Council did not pledge to set up a binding EU-wide solidarity mechanism. To respond to the latest tragedies in the Mediterranean with "solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility", MEPs say that:

- the European Commission should establish a "binding quota" for distributing asylum seekers among all EU countries,
 - member states should make full use of existing possibilities for issuing humanitarian visas and seriously consider whether to trigger the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive or Article 78(3) of the TFEU (both foresee a solidarity mechanism in the event of mass and sudden inflows of displaced persons),
-
- EU countries should make greater contributions to existing resettlement programmes, and
 - the Common European Asylum System rules should be rapidly and fully transposed into national law and implemented by all participating member states.

Cooperating with third countries and fighting smugglers

The resolution calls for closer coordination of EU and member state policies in tackling the root causes of migration and more cooperation with partner countries in the Middle East and Africa. It also calls for the strongest possible criminal sanctions against human trafficking and smuggling and urges member states and EU agencies to work more closely to detect and trace these criminal networks' funding and identify their *modus operandi*, so as to prevent them from making money by putting migrants' lives at risk.

Unipax

About us

UNIPAX WORLD UNION FOR PEACE AND THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLES: is a non profit making, non-denominational NGO that is independent from political parties, and economic interests, that works at a national and international level.

Operational bodies of UNIPAX are: the Assembly, the Executive Council, the President, the Board of Probiviri, the Board of Auditors.

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