



**Statement by  
Elizabeth Maruma Mrema  
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
on the occasion of World Food Day 2022  
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This World Food Day, I encourage all of us to consider what this day encompasses and to embrace the theme, “Leave NO ONE behind”.

Food is a basic need and a fundamental human right. And yet, the ongoing pandemic, political unrest, conflict, climate change, biodiversity loss, inflation, and international tensions are threatening global food security.

Even though more than enough food is produced globally to feed the entire population, more than 800 million people in the world faced hunger in 2020 and almost 30% of the food produced is lost or wasted. We cannot allow this to continue.

The food production/ agricultural system’s global footprint on biodiversity is expanding. Today, half of the world’s habitable land is used for agriculture, and this number is increasing, while 75% of the food on Earth comes from only 12 plants and animals. As land and water deplete, large-scale agricultural practices often rely on fertilizer, harmful pesticides, monocropping, making the agri-food sector one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss.

Agri-food systems rely on biodiversity for important ecosystem services, such as pollination, regulating soil organisms, and protection against natural pests and diseases. Increasing agricultural biodiversity can also help increase yields for food production.

On average, smallholders have higher yields and harbour greater biodiversity. The world’s smallholder farmers produce around a third of the world’s food, yet disproportionately face the impacts of large-scale environmental degradation and climatic stresses. The chances of being food insecure are also higher for women than men in every continent. (Source: [WHO](#))

World leaders will have their chance to act on this in December in Montreal, Canada at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15). Parties will have the opportunity to adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that provides a plan for a sustainable future and transition to sustainable agriculture.



Such a transition would encourage the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity by embracing regenerative agriculture and agroecological approaches that enhance productivity and resiliency, while making more efficient use of land, water, and other resources.<sup>1</sup>

But the responsibility does not just fall on world leaders. No. We all have a role to play. We can all promote sustainable diets with a greater diversity of foods. We can moderate our consumption of meat and fish and cut down waste in food supply and consumption. We must also support smallholder farmers, indigenous communities, youth, and women farmers as ambassadors of sustainable food systems.

The time has come to act on a more sustainable future. As we move towards that goal, we must make food security an urgent priority, ensuring we leave no one hungry and we leave no one behind.

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<sup>1</sup> [GBO-5 Sustainable Agriculture Transition](#)