



16 October 2026

World Food Day

World Food Day 2026 – Concept Note

- The purpose of this concept note is to provide clear, ready-to-use information and messaging that can be shared with host governments and other partners when planning events and activities for the World Food Day 2026 campaign. The messages will also be used on digital communication channels.
- OCC invites feedback and additional input on the narrative, messages, facts and stories of impact to support the development of a communications strategy, key materials and content. The final concept note will be shared with FAO offices and teams in UN languages ahead of the campaign launch.
- This initial work on the narrative and messages will be further developed in the Communication and Partner with Us guides, a Key Message Grid and Brochure.

1. INTRODUCTION - WORLD FOOD DAY 2026

Each year, the World Food Day (WFD) campaign unites governments, municipalities, businesses, civil society organizations, academia, researchers, media, and the general public, in a shared global effort to raise awareness of hunger and inspire action for the future of food, people, and the planet.

The 2026 global ceremony marking WFD will take place on 16 October at FAO headquarters during the World Food Forum (WFF), bringing together hundreds of WFD events and initiatives calling for action worldwide under the theme “**Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow**”. This year’s programme will feature remarks from keynote speakers, the Heads of the UN Rome-based agencies, and special messages from Pope Leo XIV and the UN Secretary-General, followed by the presentation of the Achievement Award. In recognition of the International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026, the Ceremony will also highlight the vital role of women in agrifood systems by showcasing and honouring outstanding women in agriculture. Many of these women heroes will come from pastoralism, recalling the second Year led by FAO in 2026, the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

On 15 October, Junior World Food Day will once again create an interactive space for youth to learn about food, agriculture and innovation through a lively discussion with FAO Food Heroes and champions.

The 2026 theme “Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow.” underscores the importance of harnessing science, technology and innovation to build agrifood systems that are more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. It highlights how access to life-changing innovations, including

traditional knowledge, is critical to ensure sufficient, diverse, safe and nutritious food for all, while safeguarding resources for future generations.

CONFLICT AS A CRITICAL DRIVER OF FOOD INSECURITY



Conflict remains a critical driver of food insecurity across many of the world's most affected countries. It is the primary driver in all six contexts where populations face Catastrophe or confirmed Famine (IPC/CH Phase 5). Since 2018, the number of people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity in conflict-affected countries has nearly doubled, rising from around 74 million to more than 147 million in 2025. Famine has been confirmed simultaneously in both Gaza and Sudan.

Where conflict persists, agrifood systems struggle to recover. Agricultural capacity erodes, markets fragment, and each successive season leaves households with fewer resources to rely on. The conflict in the Middle East in early 2026, which disrupted traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, also demonstrated how tightly interconnected energy, fertilizer, and agrifood systems are, and how shocks can cascade across them.

Addressing these interconnected challenges requires stronger coordination, investment, and innovation. Improved data systems and tools for early warning and market transparency, such as the Financing for Shock-Driven Food Crisis Facility (FSFC) and the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), enable countries to anticipate shocks and strengthen coordination. At the same time, investing in more efficient resource use and supporting farmers and rural communities can help build more resilient agrifood systems.

2. CORE NARRATIVE - INNOVATE TODAY. NOURISH TOMORROW.

Ending hunger is within reach. The world already produces enough food to nourish everyone, yet 673 million people still face hunger, and 2.6 billion cannot afford a healthy diet. As conflict, economic instability and climate shocks put pressure on agrifood systems, the challenge is how to ensure access to reliable, affordable and nutritious food for people everywhere. Innovation is transforming how food is produced, stored, transported and marketed. It brings together advances in science and technology with the knowledge, experience and ingenuity of farmers, fishers, herders and foresters - including women, youth and Indigenous Peoples – as well as investors, policymakers and entrepreneurs, because transforming our agrifood systems requires collective action.

Innovation in agrifood systems takes many forms. It includes digital advisory services, data and information systems, improved seed varieties and biotechnologies, along with farmer field schools, cooperative models, traditional land and water practices, and new approaches to production, markets, finance and distribution. Innovation can also mean reducing risk before crises emerge; preventive and cross-sectoral approaches can strengthen resilience and avoid far higher costs once shocks take place.

But innovation only fulfils its promise when it reaches the people who most need it. Many proven technologies and innovations supported by strong evidence remain unavailable, unaffordable, or poorly adapted to local needs and contexts, while lacking the financial and business models needed to scale their impact on food security. For millions of small-scale food producers – especially women and youth – access to finance, inputs, information and markets remains limited. Solutions and technologies must be

affordable, practical and suited to local conditions and needs. Inclusive innovation can strengthen productivity, support livelihoods and make agrifood systems more equitable.

Translating innovation into impact demands partnership and investment. Governments play a central role in creating the conditions for success – investing in research, strengthening rural infrastructure and setting policies that expand access to innovation responsibly. The private sector contributes by mobilizing investment, strengthening supply chains and creating jobs and new business models with scalable solutions that reach underserved populations. Partnerships across academic and research institutions, civil society, producer groups, the United Nations System and other development actors, are essential to move solutions from research to action.

Responsibility is also shared more broadly across our societies and communities. Everyday choices matter. By choosing nutritious, diverse diets and reducing food waste, we can help shape a more sustainable agrifood system. At the same time, we can support the protection of soils, water, and biodiversity, and stay informed. Greater awareness of how food is produced and distributed strengthens these choices at the individual, household, community and national levels.

Together, our efforts to foster innovation can build agrifood systems that are more stable, more inclusive and more resilient – capable of nourishing people today while protecting the resources future generations depend on.

BRIDGING KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION



While knowledge is the fuel, innovation is the engine - we need both to move the dial on food security. Agrifood innovations can increase productivity, improve nutrition and food safety, reduce food loss and waste, improve livelihoods, and enhance the resilience and sustainability of agrifood systems. Rapid technological advances in genetics and biotechnology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), remote sensing and sensors, robotics and mechanization, data analytics and digital platforms, together with smart farming tools and agrifood platforms for data collection, monitoring and early warning, offer opportunities for achieving food security.

While technological innovations offer powerful tools for agrifood system transformations, they cannot alone provide a “silver bullet” solution to food insecurity. Social, institutional, policy, financial, and grassroots innovations (shaped by evidence, power relations, incentives, and context) are also essential to improve how technologies are adopted, governed, and equitably accessed. FAO fosters all types of innovations that can strengthen the four pillars of food security (availability, access, utilization and stability).

The likelihood of impact on food security is influenced by evidence of context-specific effectiveness, equity implications, and any risks of unintended consequences over time. These complementary innovations can strengthen institutions, improve incentives, and create more enabling multi-stakeholder environments for inclusive and sustainable impact. The fostering of innovation for food security outcomes is fully aligned with the guiding principles of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy (2022), namely rights-based and people centered, gender-equal, evidence-based, needs-driven,



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sustainability-aligned, risk informed and ethics-based.

While the innovation pipeline consists of both mature and emerging innovations, there is a significant agrifood innovation access gap for millions of farmers and food consumers globally, limiting progress on productivity, health and nutrition, sustainability and poverty. Fragmented policies, limited innovation capacity, underinvestment in R&D, and weak delivery systems continue to constrain development, adoption and scaling of agrifood innovations. Fostering innovation for food security requires a strategic, coordinated multi-partner approach, which is interdisciplinary, goal-oriented and aligned with food security needs.

Our Pathways to impact are anchored in the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy, the FAO Strategy on Climate Change and the FAO Strategy for Private Sector Engagement.

The Science and Innovation Forum 2026 will bring together the world's leading minds, practitioners and change agents to focus on how to accelerate innovations to achieve food security for all. SIF 2026 will feature sessions on innovation systems, science-policy interfaces, science communication, youth and women innovators, entrepreneurship, investment, AI and digital tools, data governance, gender inclusion, crop nutrition, climate change, water efficiency, amongst others. Keep up to date with [FAO's Science, Technology and Innovation activities](#)

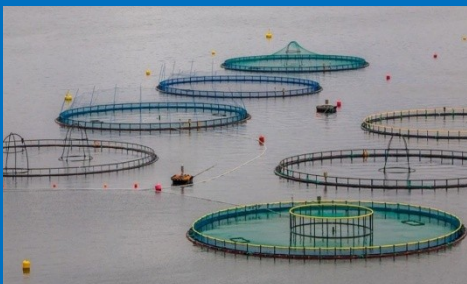
3. FACTS

See sources [here](#)

- In 2024, around **673 million people faced hunger**, while **2.6 billion**, nearly one in three, could not afford a healthy diet.
- Globally, about **13% of all food produced is lost after harvest** (before retail stage), and an additional **19% is wasted at retail and consumer levels**.
- Women farmers need greater access to resources including skills, finance, technology and innovation. Even when they manage farms of the same size as men, the **gap between men and women's land productivity is 24%**.
- **Indigenous Peoples**, who make up around 6 percent of the global population, are among the most effective **custodians of the world's remaining biodiversity, thanks to their food and knowledge systems** developed over generations.
- Around **1.3 billion young people** (aged 15–24) involved in agrifood systems globally, represent a **critical force for innovation, employment and transformation** across food value chains.
- **Agricultural research and development** (R&D) provide some of the highest returns among all rural development investments. Global investment in agrifood R&D has **slowed sharply**: a growth of 2.7% annually from 1980-2015 dropped to 1.9% from 2015-2021.
- Agrifood systems account for around **70% of global freshwater withdrawals**. Smart farming can significantly improve water and resource efficiency.

- Over **60% of land degraded by human activity** takes place on **agricultural lands**. Innovation in integrated land, soil and water management is essential to safeguard food security and build resilient agrifood systems.
- The agrifood sector accounts for **about one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions**. Climate-smart technologies, including biotechnologies and smart farming can reduce emissions while boosting productivity and resilience.

BLUE TRANSFORMATION



Since 2020, FAO's Blue Transformation has supported countries in using technology and innovation to improve the production, management, processing and marketing of aquatic foods.

In aquaculture, projects are strengthening biosecurity and animal health. In Sri Lanka and Peru, the Smart Aquaculture Biosecurity (SAB) project is helping shrimp farmers protect their farms from disease, environmental stress and sudden shocks by combining

digital tools and automation with stronger everyday biosecurity practices. Similarly, in Albania and Tunisia, the AQUABIOSAFE-MED project is applying early warning systems and disease detection to improve aquatic animal health and food safety, enabling authorities and farmers to respond more quickly to outbreaks.

Innovation is also improving post-harvest practices and markets. Across Zambia, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, the FISH4ACP project is supporting investments in solar-powered cold storage, innovative processing technologies and infrastructure. These solutions are also improving product quality and create better market opportunities, including for small-scale producers and women-led businesses.

Blue Transformation further supports innovation in fisheries. Through the Common Oceans programme, biodegradable "jelly" Fish Aggregating Devices are being introduced in tuna fisheries to replace plastic-based gear, reducing marine pollution and impacts on non-target species. In parallel, initiatives in Sri Lanka and Grenada are developing climate-resilient, fuel-saving fishing vessels to support small-scale fishers, while long-standing partnerships such as the EAF-Nansen Programme are generating the data countries need to better understand marine ecosystems and strengthen fisheries management for food security across Africa and the Bay of Bengal.

4. FAO'S WORK

- **FAO SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION** <https://www.fao.org/science-technology-and-innovation/en>
- **NUTRITION** <https://www.fao.org/nutrition/en/>
- **BIODIVERSITY** <https://www.fao.org/biodiversity/en>
- **FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE** <https://www.fao.org/fishery>

- **FAO IN EMERGENCIES** <https://www.fao.org/emergencies/en/>
- **FAO LAND, SOIL AND WATER** - www.fao.org/land-water/home/en/
- **ANIMAL PRODUCTION AND HEALTH**
<https://www.fao.org/agriculture/animal-production-and-health/en>
- **FORESTRY** <https://www.fao.org/forestry/en>
- **PLANT PRODUCTION AND PROTECTION** <https://www.fao.org/plant-production-protection/en>
- **FAO PARTNERSHIPS** <https://www.fao.org/partnerships/en/>
- **FAO STRATEGY FOR PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT 2026-2030**
<https://doi.org/10.4060/cd8726en>
- **RESOURCE PARTNERSHIPS** (Resource mobilization) <https://www.fao.org/partnerships/resource-partners/en/>
- **FAO HAND-IN-HAND INITIATIVE** <https://www.fao.org/hand-in-hand/en>
- **SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION** <https://www.fao.org/sstc-gateway/>
- **FAO INVESTMENT CENTRE** <https://www.fao.org/investment-centre/en>
- **FAO AND EU PARTNERSHIP** <https://www.fao.org/europeanunion/en/>
- **ONE HEALTH** <https://www.fao.org/one-health/en/>
- **GENDER** <https://www.fao.org/gender/en/>
- **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES** <https://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/en/>
- **FAO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND THE FOUR BETTERS** <https://www.fao.org/strategic-framework/en>
- **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT (WFF GLOBAL YOUTH ACTION INITIATIVE)**
<https://youth.world-food-forum.org/>
- **CODEX ALIMENTARIUS** <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/home/en/>
- **FAO ELEARNING ACADEMY** <https://elearning.fao.org/>
- **FAO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:** <https://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals-helpdesk/en>

TRANSFORMING LIVES AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL



Innovation is transforming lives at the community level. In **Colombia's** Amazon region, a partnership between the Government and FAO is supporting the **Yagua community of La Libertad** with an integrated model that combines clean energy, water access, and sustainable land use. This approach connects solutions across systems. Dendroenergy gardens (where fast-growing trees or woody plants are grown specifically to produce renewable energy) have enabled

the planting of 8,800 trees alongside food crops in traditional *chagras* (traditional Indigenous agroforestry and food-production systems), linking reforestation with food production. Eco-efficient stoves with thermoelectric devices convert heat into electricity, providing light and power in off-grid

homes. Access to safe water has also improved through a rainwater collection and purification system producing up to 6,000 liters per day. Together, these innovations are enhancing health, restoring ecosystems, and strengthening livelihoods for the community.

Integrating local practices with data and technology is also the basis of the **Pastoralist Knowledge Hub** in **Western and Central Africa** which combines traditional livestock practices with data and early warning systems to strengthen resilience in dryland areas. Other examples include **FAO's Livestock Environmental Assessment and**

Performance (LEAP) Partnership, which brings governments, the private sector and researchers together to develop science-based methods and data to improve the environmental sustainability of livestock systems. **FAO's Digital Services portfolio** also showcases practical e-extension applications for livestock farmers, including mobile tools that provide tailored information on animal health and production, helping farmers make better-informed decisions.



5. CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORK

World Food Day is more than just a flagship event for FAO and its partners; it represents a major annual campaign that aligns and elevates communications efforts across FAO's offices (headquarters and decentralized) and mobilizes FAO's partnerships, champions, platforms, channels and voices to drive progress towards our common goal to eliminate hunger and food insecurity. To support the campaign roll-out, alignment across FAO and improved reporting, OCC will develop a campaign framework that considers: objectives, partnership leverage and alignment, audience insights, strategy, implementation, and scoring.

World Food Day on the FAO Digital Media Hub

Below is a schedule for the launch of new multimedia material that will be uploaded to the [FAO Digital Media Hub](#). These links can be shared easily with external partners for local printing or production of materials.

ACTIVITY & PRODUCTS SUMMARY

DATE

WFD Concept Note

Jun

[Website](#) – Phase I

Jun

Launch to FAO offices - concept note, website, **call for stories** (text/photos) about food heroes

Jun



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Social media Trello Board with first SM assets	Jun
Poster Contest (ages 5-19)	Jun
Activity Book (see example)	Jun
Circular State Letter to Ministers of Agriculture	Jun
Communication Guides (FAO offices, governments, schools, private sector) and “Partner with Us” guide	Jun
Brochure (see example)	Jun
Youth video	Jul
Promo video/ TV advert (see example)	Jul
Radio PSA (see example)	Jul
Video Message from the Director-General	Sept
Food Hero stories published	Sept/Oct
DG op-ed and talking points for events	Sept
UNSG video message (TBC)	Oct

TRADITION IS INNOVATION PROVEN OVER GENERATIONS



Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) show how tradition and innovation can work together to sustain agrifood systems, landscapes, and cultures over time. These sites are living examples of how communities manage natural resources using knowledge passed down through generations—while adapting to new challenges.

In **Morocco’s Ait Souab–Ait Mansour region**, the Argan tree lies at the heart of a unique agro-sylvo-pastoral system that supports livelihoods, biodiversity, and cultural identity. Today, this heritage is being strengthened through innovations such as improved irrigation and water retention techniques, helping communities adapt to climate change while preserving their traditions. GIAHS demonstrate that innovation is not only about new technologies; it is also about



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valuing and building on traditional knowledge to create resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for the future.

Through FAO's **South-South and Triangular Cooperation**, countries with Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems also exchange knowledge and innovations across regions, scaling solutions that blend traditional practices with modern adaptation approaches. For example, under the FAO–China South-South Cooperation Programme, **GIAHS**

communities from over 20 countries have come together to share practical experiences on water management, biodiversity conservation and climate resilience, demonstrating how heritage-based innovation travels across borders while remaining rooted in local contexts.



6. RELATED FAO STORIES

Feature stories related to Innovation, Industry & Infrastructure (SDG 9)

[Stories | Science, Technology and Innovation | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United](#)



PRODUCING MORE WITH LESS

New technologies are transforming food and agriculture, helping farmers produce more with fewer resources while protecting the planet. Through the **FAO–IAEA partnership**, science is driving innovation to strengthen agrifood systems and build resilience to climate change. From space to soil, solutions are evolving. Nuclear radiation is being used in laboratory settings to develop crop varieties with improved traits for resilience to climate change, pests and diseases, while technologies such as the **Cosmic Ray Neutron Sensor (CRNS)** help farmers measure soil moisture and optimize water use.

At the same time, powerful digital platforms like **SEPAL** and **WaPOR** provide real-time data on land, forests, and water productivity, supporting better decisions and more sustainable resource management. Together, these innovations showcase how cutting-edge science can help build more efficient, resilient agrifood systems for the future.

6. Theme in UN languages

Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow.

Innovar hoy para nutrir mañana.



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Innover aujourd'hui pour nourrir demain.

ابتكار اليوم، غذاء الغد.

Иновации сегодня – обеспеченность продовольствием завтра.

创新当下，粮安未来

Innovare oggi per nutrire il domani.

Contact: world-food-day@fao.org

Technical focal points:

DDCS – Mona Chaya; DDCN – Tina Farmer; DDCE – Eduardo De La Chica; DDCB – Frank Nyakairu; DDCM – Sabina Zaccaro; ODG – Gabriella Piacentini.

OCC - Aoife Riordan, Greg Beals, Vanessa Curcio, Diana GutierrezMendez

Secondary focal points: [OCC Technical Communications Coordination Group](#)