



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



UK Representation
to the UN Rome

Side event to the 176th FAO Council

3 December 2024 | 12:30-14:00 CET

International Day of Persons with Disabilities: Ensuring nobody is left behind in agrifood systems

FAO Sheikh Zayed Centre, with International Sign Language interpretation

Webcast on the FAO Website: <https://www.fao.org/webcast/home/en/>

Hosted by the United Kingdom Representation to the United Nations (UN) in Rome, the Australian Representation to the UN in Rome, the New Zealand Representation to the UN in Rome, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), and with the participation of the [Programme for Evidence to Inform Disability Action](#) (PENDA), through the International Centre for Evidence in Disability at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Rationale:

Inclusivity is central to ensure that agrifood systems are transformed to their full potential, leaving no one behind. Currently, however, a significant number of people whose livelihoods are based in agrifood systems experience high levels of marginalization, vulnerability, exclusion and discrimination. This is despite the huge potential such groups have to support the shift towards more sustainable, health and inclusive agrifood systems. Persons with disabilities are one such important yet disadvantaged group.

On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December), FAO member states, Disabled Persons Organisations, Civil Society, FAO's Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP) and others invite you to join us to see for yourself the role that persons with disabilities can play in food and agriculture, and yet the barriers they currently face to achieving their full potential.

According to the Convention on the Rights of Disabilities of the United Nations, persons with disabilities include those who have "long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."¹ Estimates of the World Health Organization show that 1.3 billion people experience significant disability worldwide, which represents 16 percent of the world's population.²

Persons with disabilities are more likely to live in food insecurity households, and disability intersects with other forms of exclusion to compound issues like gender inequality.³ Women and girls with

¹ UN. 2006. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol. *A/RES/61/106*. New York, USA, p. 4. https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_61_106.pdf

² WHO. 2023. *10 facts on disability*. In: World Health Organization. Geneva, Switzerland. <https://www.who.int/news-room/facts-in-pictures/detail/disabilities>

³ [UN Flagship Disability and Development Report \(2018\)](#)

disabilities are “multiply disadvantaged” and are “particularly vulnerable to abuse.”⁴ Farmers with disabilities face systemic, attitudinal and environmental barriers to their full participation in society and the agrifood sector. This plays out as limited access to services, including finance and technologies, including assistive technologies, lack of disability-friendly agricultural extension provisions, lack of meaningful participation in rural and farm decision-making, and stigma and discrimination, amongst other issues.⁵ At the same time, when adequate support is provided, most persons with disabilities “have full working capacity” and make “invaluable contributions to the wellbeing of their households and communities”, offering and pursuing pathways out of poverty and exclusion.^{6,7}

However, there are a range of solutions available across agrifood systems, from production through to consumption and beyond.⁸ This FAO Council 176 side event on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities will look at the challenges and opportunities of engaging with disabilities, including through the full participation of persons with disabilities, in order to ensure that our efforts to transform agrifood systems leave no one behind, including persons with disabilities. A documentary by the Disability Justice Project will precede an interactive panel discussion, including with the participation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (following the mantra: *nothing about us, without us*), where different experiences and approaches to disability inclusion will be shared and discussed.

A particular spotlight will be shone on persons with disabilities in the South-West Pacific Region, and their struggles at the nexus of climate, food and exclusion, as well as on turning evidence into action, including through the UK-funded [Programme for Evidence to Inform Disability Action](#).

Interpretation will be offered in all 6 UN languages, Italian, and International Sign Language.

Objectives:

1. Celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities
2. Showcase the importance of including persons with disabilities across agrifood systems
3. Shine a particular light on turning evidence into action through achievement of long-term improvements in wellbeing and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

⁴ UNDESA. n.d. *Factsheet on persons with disabilities*. In: UNDESA: *Disability*. New York, USA.

⁵ [Inclusive Pathways: Enhancing Participation of Farmers With Disability In Agriculture | AUDA-NEPAD](#)

⁶ International Labour Organization (ILO) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). *Labour market inclusion of people with disabilities*. Paper presented at the 1st Meeting of the G20 Employment Working Group 20 - 22 February 2018, Buenos Aires, Argentina, p. 15

⁷ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). *Persons with disabilities*. [Cited 15 November 2024]. <https://www.ifad.org/en/persons-with-disabilities>

⁸ [Growing Disability Inclusiveness in Agriculture](#)

Agenda:

12:30	Opening
12:30	Welcome remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maurizio Martina, FAO Deputy Director-General- Her Excellency Evelyn Ashton-Griffiths, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture in Rome
12:45	Screening of the Documentary ‘Rising Tides, Raising Voices’ by Jody Santos <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Introductory remarks by Jody Santos, Founding Executive Director of the Disability Justice Project
13:05	Panel Discussion to Share Experiences, Projects and Approaches Moderated by Lauren M. Phillips, Deputy Director, Rural Transformation and Gender Equality, FAO Participation from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Her Excellency Nella Pepe Tavita-Levy, Ambassador and Permanent Representative Samoa to the UN in Geneva and Permanent Representative to FAO○ Roberto Rossi, Il Trattore, Social Cooperative based in Rome○ Morgon Banks, Associate Professor in Disability Research, on behalf of the Programme for Evidence to Inform Disability Action, International Centre for Evidence in Disability at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine○ Khaled Mohamed, farmer, participant in the FAO project “Sustainable Management of Kharga Oasis Agro-Ecosystems in the Egyptian Western Desert”
13:35	Q&A <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Including response from the floor from His Excellency Bassam Rady, Ambassador of Egypt to Italy and Permanent Representative to FAO
13:50	Closing Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Co-Chairs of the South West Pacific Regional Group, Australia and New Zealand
14:00	Closing