



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Chefs

AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

FAO AND UNESCO COLLABORATION ON FOOD AND CULTURE



THE CONTEXT

Food, diets and traditional cultural practices related to food represent a strong driver of cultural identity. They provide people and communities with a strong sense of social integration, inclusiveness, peace and stability. In many communities across the world, eating together is the foundation of cultural continuity, as it is associated with social exchange and an affirmation and renewal of family, group and community identity. The production, processing, trade, preparation and consumption of food involve skills, knowledge, traditions and natural resource management practices that bring people together. Many societies have found ways to produce and consume food in harmony with their environment, drawing on their knowledge and heritage as key resources to be preserved and passed onto future generations, for the benefit of better health, nutrition, food safety, prevention of food waste, care practices, natural resource management and social cohesion.

Over the last century, food systems have undergone considerable transformation due to technological advances, the massive use of fossil fuels, migration, urbanization and globalization. This transformation has brought important benefits in terms of increased food production, able to feed a growing world population. However, it has also produced negative impacts that pose risks to the sustainability of the planet and the existence of humanity: loss of cultural

and ecological diversity; marginalization of large groups of family farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fisher-folks, and other rural populations; erosion of every-day culinary culture and people's knowledge of food preparation; increased consumption of ultra-processed food, that is poor in fibre and micronutrients, but rich in caloric energy, additives and anti-microbial substances, affecting the composition of the human microbiome; and rapid rise in obesity and associated non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The challenges that affect diets and food systems are multiple, complex and critical to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that are of particular relevance include: poverty reduction, (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), healthy lives and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), clean water (SDG 6), renewable energy (SDG 7), decent work (SDG 8), innovation (SDG 9), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable production and consumption (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13), protecting the oceans (SDG 14), and land and sustainable ecosystems (SDG 15).

FAO and UNESCO together with other partners are supporting Governments to address these challenges and preserve the common heritage associated with food systems, through initiatives such as:

- The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) and the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) which seek to preserve agricultural traditions;

- The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage which aims at safeguarding knowledge and practices that are recognized by communities as part of their intangible cultural heritage and which may be related to food, such as the Washoku culinary tradition of Japan, the Mediterranean diet, the traditional Mexican cuisine, and the Nsima culinary tradition of Malawi.

These initiatives however are inadequately reflected in sectoral policies on health, agriculture, or markets, which shape food systems. Government actions to address malnutrition challenges must include a focus on influencing consumer and private sector knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, which requires bringing the cultural dimensions of agriculture and food into development and sectoral policies.

In support of this endeavor, UNESCO, through its Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Programme, fosters climate change awareness in primary education, through lifelong learning and across curricula development. UNESCO designated sites like Biosphere Reserves and the UNESCO Global Geoparks promote interaction between governmental and non-governmental actors in the fields of culture and gastronomy, food, health and education. They promote healthy diets adapted to current lifestyles, in line with the local food culture and heritage, as well as sustainable production from family farms and food waste reduction. They also facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in these matters among different countries and regions of the world.



Andean agriculture in Cusco-Puno Region, Peru



Traditional Mulberry System in Xiaojin, China



Dates Production System in Siwa Oasis, Egypt

UNESCO's work takes place within the context of a solid international regulatory framework and through a number of longstanding intergovernmental programmes:

- The World Heritage Convention (1972) for the preservation of cultural and natural sites of outstanding universal value, including cultural landscapes, some of which are agricultural sites and places for food production and marine sites;
- The Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (2003) for the preservation of living heritage;
- The UNESCO Creative Cities Programme for its Network of cities of gastronomy that sustain the creative economy;
- The Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) for the preservation of the biological diversity;
- The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) for the preservation of oceans and species; The Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme for its contribution to assessing and measuring evolving societal changes and behaviors;

FAO for its part has been at the forefront of efforts to promote the role of chefs as agents of change helping to bring about sustainable food systems transformation, including the eradication of hunger and food insecurity, the promotion of healthy diets and the reduction of food waste and loss. In collaboration with hundreds of chefs FAO developed between 2008 and 2011 a communication and awareness-raising campaign in Latin America that show cased the importance of involving chefs in the fight to eradicate

hunger and malnutrition. Since then, FAO has collaborated globally with several renowned chefs in advocacy activities associated with World Food Day, the International Year of Quinoa in 2013, the International Year of Pulses in 2016 and the Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems and Healthy Diets, held in Bangkok in 2017. In 2018, a social media campaign on food waste reduction, targeting the Near East region, involved four regional chefs.

As part of FAO's communication and awareness-raising campaign on food waste, Massimo Bottura, the internationally renowned chef and founder of the Food for Soul initiative, shared his experiences and insights in a high-level event at FAO headquarters in 2016. The initiative works with different partners to create and sustain community kitchens around the world and to raise awareness on the issues of food waste and social isolation.

During the 41st Codex Alimentarius Commission and on occasion of the first World Food Safety Day, Chef Heinz Beck offered a cooking show at FAO Headquarters. Moreover, several chefs from around the globe joined the World Food Day 2018 campaign, including FAO National Ambassador Chef Nakamura (Japan), Chef Simon (France), Chef Elijah Amoo Addo (Ghana) and Chef Alfredo Oropeza (Mexico).

These experiences have highlighted the importance of creating synergies between global alliances on the one hand and relevant national policy agendas on the other, to increase impact and sustainability at the country level.



Chef Massimo Bottura



Chef Kim Palhus, Chef Anahita Dhondy, Hlamlalani Ngwenya, Chef Elijah Amoo Addo



Chef Heinz Beck



Chef Alfredo Oropeza



Chef Nakamura

THE ROLE OF CHEFS DE CUISINE AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

FAO and UNESCO, in collaboration with member states, have worked together towards recognizing the importance of the cultural dimensions of production systems and food. There is scope for greater cooperation between FAO, UNESCO and chefs in addressing the challenges of malnutrition - particularly obesity and diet-related NCDs - and the acceleration of the loss of cultural and ecological diversity.

Experience from past decades points to the need for mobilizing the capacities of different stakeholders as agents of change, and incorporating new strategies of awareness raising, communication and education for food and nutrition. These actions must keep up with rapid developments in the media and new technologies, especially their role in influencing consumer choices and shaping food culture.

Today, gastronomy has become a domain that, in addition to its economic importance, has positioned itself as an area of interest for a large part of the population, the media and governments. Chefs today are among the actors who shape public opinion and influence the general population, the private sector and governments. In the last two decades, a growing number of Chefs de Cuisine

have looked to traditional food systems, recovering the notion of food linked to the territory and local culture, and promoting a revision of culinary trends to offer delicious and healthy food. This growing trend considers that healthy diets rely on the quality of ingredients from their initial stage of production and values the role of local producers in supplying fresh, diverse and safe food produced in a sustainable way. Movements such as Slow Food or the Peruvian Gastronomy Society (APEGA) and its *Mistura* initiative, as well as branding of local food products from biosphere reserves that are good for biodiversity and local income generation, are examples of this trend.

Chefs have become increasingly involved in the global movement to reduce food waste, championing food waste reduction efforts in their own restaurants, as well as empowering local communities to fight food waste. In June 2018, the World Association of Chefs Societies (World Chefs) met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to shed light on the links between the culinary industry and food waste, environmental degradation, and hunger.

ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE:
Some of the Chefs who contributed to FAO's book "Pulses: Nutritious seeds for a sustainable future" written on the occasion of the International Year of Pulses in 2016. Top left: Chef Ricardo Muñoz (Mexico), top right: Chef Helena Rizzo (Brazil), bottom left: Chef Veronika Jackson (Tanzania), bottom right: Chef Abraham Garcia (Spain).



THE WAY FORWARD FOR FAO AND UNESCO

Achieving the SDGs requires greater coherence and collaboration between multiple stakeholders. A joint initiative between FAO and UNESCO on food and culture, involving chefs as agents of change, presents an important opportunity for joint advocacy work on the importance of culture and heritage in achieving healthy diets and sustainable agriculture. This can be done by building on the existing cooperation between UNESCO's 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the UNESCO Global Geoparks and FAO's GIAHS Programme.

The objectives of a joint FAO-UNESCO initiative would be to:

- Advocate for the value of culture in achieving sustainable food systems and healthy diets as well as for the importance of agriculture and food in shaping culture in different communities, underlining the importance of diversity.
- Build broad alliances and a global platform to mobilize the capacities of different actors, such as chefs, to strengthen policy dialogue around culture, food, healthy diets, sustainable and inclusive production, and food waste reduction.
- Promote the establishment of national platforms for collaboration between governmental and non-governmental actors in the fields of culture and gastronomy, food, health and education that promote healthy diets adapted to current lifestyles, in line with the local food culture and heritage, as well as sustainable production from family farms and food waste reduction.
- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in these matters among different countries and regions of the world.
- Demonstrate the added value of this chef alliance as a prestigious and unique platform that will combine the talent, outreach and mobilization capacity of chefs and the know-how and expertise of FAO and UNESCO in food, culture and heritage, among others.
- Provide a platform for behavioural change and at the same time showcase how FAO, UNESCO, chefs and other involved stakeholders are jointly working towards the achievement of the SDGs.
- Combine FAO and UNESCO's educational and advocacy efforts to target youth with action-oriented messages on how to implement positive change, encouraging those starting culinary careers to take food security to the next level.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHS:

First row (left to right)

GIAHS System of the Traditional Hadong Tea Agrosystem in Hwagae-myeon in the Republic of Korea.

FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva and UNESCO's Director-General Audrey Azoulay signing the new Memorandum of Understanding in Paris.

Chef Veronika Jackson contributed to FAO's book "Pulses: Nutritious seeds for a sustainable future" written on the occasion of the International Year of Pulses in 2016.

Second row (left to right)

Chef Mohamed Fedal contributed to FAO's book "Pulses: Nutritious seeds for a sustainable future" written on the occasion of the International Year of Pulses in 2016.

Chef Didem Senal contributed to FAO's book "Pulses: Nutritious seeds for a sustainable future" written on the occasion of the International Year of Pulses in 2016.

Chef Massimo Bottura and Chef David Hertz presenting the "Reffetto-Rio" project at FAO headquarters on July 2016.