

UN Food Systems Summit+2 Stocktaking Moment

SESSION REPORT

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Type (click one): HLS/PLENARY – LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE – SPECIAL EVENT

Healthy diets, cultures and traditions: Lessons from the

Mediterranean Diet

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List of speakers, in all segments, and key messages

NAME AND TITLE OF SPEAKER	SEGMENT (opening, panel, closing, etc.)	KEY MESSAGES OR/AND RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
1. Francesco Lollobrigida, Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, Italy	Opening statement	<p>The Mediterranean diet is globally recognized as a virtuous model that has allowed Italy levels of longevity among the highest in the world. The beneficial effects on the health of consumers, the natural environment and society in general are demonstrated by an extensive scientific literature in the fields of medical, nutritional, agronomic, environmental and socio-economic.</p> <p>UNESCO has recognized the Mediterranean Diet as an intangible heritage of humanity and FAO has defined it as an example of a sustainable diet.</p>

		<p>The Mediterranean Diet represents not only a consumption model but also a sustainable production system that guarantees healthy ecosystems, social and economic equity.</p> <p>We must guarantee healthy diets for everybody by combining several elements: nutrition, tradition, environmental, economic and social sustainability. This is the model to reach food security. Mediterranean diet is a paradigm of virtuous diets because it follows sustainability principles and respect for the environment, peoples and their knowledge, and quality of the final product.</p>
<p>2. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization</p>	<p>Keynote speech 1</p>	<p>Food is a central part of our lives, it is bounded with our culture and yet unhealthy diets are one of the world's leading killers with an estimate 8 million deaths a year. Therefore, first of all we must understand what makes a diet "healthy".</p> <p>All healthy diets have 4 things in common: 1) Healthy diets should provide adequate amount of energy and essential nutrients and not exceed the needs of the body; 2) healthy diets should provide energy mainly coming from complex carbohydrates and one third from unsaturated fats; 3) certain foods and nutrients should be limited in consumption, such as free sugars, salt, saturated fats, etc.; 4) healthy diets should include a variety of food groups and a variety of foods within groups. And, of course, healthy diets should be safe.</p>
<p>3. Frida Krifca, Minister of Agriculture (Albania) and President of CIHEAM</p>	<p>Keynote speech 2</p>	<p>Estimates indicate that up to 800 million peoples faced hunger in 2022, more than in 2019. In addition, approximately 42% of the world population cannot afford a healthy diet.</p> <p>We're in 2023 and yet we are witnessing the use of food to negotiate politically; it is now more than ever imperative to accelerate actions to achieve the SDGs by 2030. We can combine structural transformation across food systems with the trump card we have inherited from our ancestors, which is the key to a healthy and long life: the Mediterranean diet.</p>

		<p>Adhering to the Mediterranean diet provides health benefits but also supports sustainable product income, protects the biodiversity, improves human interactions as food is shared and enjoyed through connecting people, communities, culture and history. Our action must be geared towards building more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems.</p>
4. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union of the Mediterranean	Keynote Speech 3	<p>Mediterranean diet is not only a UNESCO’s intangible heritage, but also a precious tool for implementing the SDGs in our action.</p> <p>This diet can bring many solutions and good practices that could be scaled up to the global level.</p> <p>We need to enhance three elements to face the world’s multifaceted challenges: knowledge, skills and partnership. Green transition and mitigation and adaptation to climate change are crucial to reach food security and sustainability.</p>
5. Lynnette Neufeld, Director Food and Nutrition Division, FAO	Moderator	<p>The Mediterranean diet has proven benefits for health and for resilient and sustainable agri-food systems, but consumption patterns are undergoing many changes worldwide. We must act to valorise and sustain the Mediterranean diet model from production to consumption.</p>
6. Roberto Occhiuto, President of Calabria (Italy) and President of the Intermediterranean Commission	Panel 1	<p>Local communities in the Mediterranean area can cooperate for the sustainable production of the foods that make up the basket of the Mediterranean diet.</p> <p>We need to conceive an agri-food district for the Mediterranean region and create such ecosystem between local governments to enhance this heritage.</p>
7. Said Ben Zayed, Governor of Medenine, Tunisia	Panel 1	<p>Mediterranean cities are set to play a major role in promoting the Mediterranean diet, while also reinforcing a Mediterranean identity, which is often linked to food, traditional products and typical Mediterranean cultures.</p> <p>Wishing to benefit from interaction with other municipalities outside the continent, many African cities have signed twinning agreements with other European cities, which now make it easier to enable a rapid and fruitful exchange of knowledge on food policies.</p>

<p>8. Wissam Zaarour, Mayor of Byblos, Lebanon</p>	<p>Panel 1</p>	<p>The valorization of healthy diets, cultures and traditions needs a comprehensive approach with strong collaborations among various stakeholders to implementing policies, promoting education and creating a supportive environment.</p> <p>Byblos community, in Lebanon, adopted some strategies such as community engagement, promotion of nutrition education, support of local food production, to create a network that improves public health and reduce the prevalence of diet-related diseases.</p>
<p>9. Ettore Prandini, President of Coldiretti</p>	<p>Panel 2</p>	<p>The Mediterranean diet is much more than just a food model: it is the future of our children, an identity linked to culture, sustainability and the environment in which we live and, most of all, it is also a battle for democracy and social justice.</p> <p>Food is of fundamental importance to the future of the Mediterranean, helping us rediscover the geopolitical importance that this area has and creating an element of biodiversity, sustainability and cooperation.</p> <p>Our challenge is to counter artificial and processed food products made in laboratory that endanger people’s health, identities and culture and paralyse the socio-economic development of the Mediterranean area.</p>
<p>10. Paolo Mascarino, President of Federalimentare</p>	<p>Panel 2</p>	<p>Italy has applied the concept of “circular economy” to reduce the environmental impact of food production. In the last 30 years food industry’s water consumption have been reduced by 50%, energy consumption by 20% and in the last 10 years - thanks to technological innovation - CO2 emissions have been reduced by 25%.</p> <p>Food education is crucial to reach a healthy lifestyle. Italy’s food industry also holds a commendable record: 80% of packaging is recycled. All these innovations, combined with the strong focus on sustainability in production’s value chains, makes Italian industry highly competitive on the global market.</p> <p>Italy is the third longest-living country in the world and has the lowest obesity index among others European countries thanks to the healthy Mediterranean diet; we must keep this status by investing in food education among the youngest and promoting the positive principles of the Mediterranean diet internationally.</p>

<p>11. Gunther Beger, Managing Director of the Directorate for SDG Innovation and Economic Transformation, UNIDO</p>	<p>Panel 2</p>	<p>We must invest in promoting the supply chain of healthy and sustainable food production in developing countries and help farmers and communities so that full food safety can also be achieved in these countries.</p>
<p>12. Orazio Schillaci, Minister of Health, Italy</p>	<p>Closing statement</p>	<p>Nutrition and traditional diets have significant effects on various aspects of our lives, both from an individual and a collective point of view. Traditional diets are also environmentally sustainable: the use of feedstock, bounded to the territory, from low-impact crops that respect nature's cycles, reduces the environmental footprint of food systems and helps safeguard plant and animal biodiversity. Traditional healthy diets also reduce food waste.</p> <p>Italy promotes the Mediterranean diet since it fights malnutrition and promotes the “successful aging” by reducing mortality and preventing cardiovascular diseases. It is also economically sustainable also as a result of a significant reduction in healthcare expenditure by government and citizens, and social sustainable by reinforcing food awareness and the bond between a community and its own food system.</p> <p>Adopting this type of diet also makes it possible to counter the so called “triple burden” of malnutrition, sadly a globally growing phenomenon affecting also the developed countries: malnutrition by excess, malnutrition by deficiency and the malnutrition by lack of micronutrients.</p> <p>We must commit ourselves to the recovery and spreading of traditional healthy diets. Our primary goal should be to focus on food education and give people the tools to make healthy, informed choices. In order to keep the public's attention on these aspects high, it is important to start working in schools and involve the youngest. To do so the Italian Ministry of Health has invested in education and information projects both in schools in Italy and in Italian schools abroad.</p> <p>International cooperation is a key to success to promote healthy traditional diets and spread good practices.</p>

Interventions from the floor

SPEAKER	KEY POINT OF INTERVENTION
1. Jhénifer Mojica Flórez, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Colombia	All around the world, many communities survived colonialism, slavery and poverty by relying upon their traditional food systems , family agriculture and local products. Also, the COVID pandemic confirmed that traditional agriculture is the main resource to ensure food security for all isolated populations: we must act to reduce international food dependency and invest in local agricultural competitiveness for these populations.
2. Katsumata Takaaki, State Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan	Japanese traditional and healthy diet “washoku” contributes to longevity and prevention of obesity among Japanese peoples. It also contributes to conserve local communities and their culture and traditions. So Japan supports the idea, proposed by the Italian Government, of defending healthy and traditional diets all over the world.
3. Phrang Roy, Coordinator of the Indigenous Partnership for Agroecology and Food Sovereignty, India	Our community in India is investing in food education, inspired by the Italian “ slow food ” movement of good, fair and clean food, to support Indigenous People’s food system.
4. Louise Mabulo, Founder of Cacao Project, Philippines	With the cacao project, we invest in building capacities to advance food systems and implement truly inclusive and holistic food systems. An intergenerational collaboration is necessary to scale up the sustainable food future.

Overall summary, conclusions and recommended actions (max 250 words)

1. Diets are not only foods. They are a way of life and embed cultural, economic, environmental and social aspects.
2. Basic principles for healthy diets are common and shared, so they can be promoted worldwide.
3. National and local governments must be supported in structuring and implementing food policies, promoting education and creating a supportive environment to valorise healthy diets.
4. Sustainability can be reached if every food systems’ stakeholder is supported and local production is supported and valorised.
5. Traditional food culture contributes to longevity and diseases prevention.