



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS
on the occasion of
WORLD FOOD DAY
16 OCTOBER 2015**

“Social protection and agriculture: breaking the cycle of rural poverty”

Celebrating World Food Day, under the theme “Social protection and agriculture: breaking the cycle of rural poverty”, provides an opportunity to emphasize in food systems how biodiversity underpins social protection. Biodiversity is the foundation of farming. It is the source of the components of production (crops, livestock, farmed fish), and the genetic diversity within these that allows for adaptation to current needs and adaptability for future ones. A diversity of species, varieties and breeds, as well as wild sources (fish, plants, bush-meat, insects and fungi) underpins dietary diversity and good nutrition.

Biodiversity is also essential for agricultural production systems, underpinning ecosystem services, such as pollination, pest control, nutrient cycling and soil fertility. At the landscape level, biodiversity underpins such ecosystem services as erosion control and water supply, including buffering impacts of floods and droughts, and, at larger continental scales ecosystems are important for maintaining hydrological cycles. Collectively, these benefits of biodiversity support the natural resource base upon which social systems in agriculture depend. This is most obvious in small-scale farming systems in developing countries that support the food and nutrition security and livelihood of millions of the rural poor. This includes improving resilience: for example, biodiverse farms are more resilient to climate shocks and biodiversity resources in landscapes have for millenniums provided insurance as food in times of crisis. Often, biodiversity is the most important asset of small-scale resource poor farmers – as demonstrated by the strong inter-connectedness of traditional farming and biodiversity conservation among indigenous peoples and local communities.

The fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, released in 2014, stresses the critical importance of food systems and agriculture to the achievement of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, especially Target 6 on sustainable fisheries, Target 7 on sustainable management of agriculture, forestry and aquaculture, Target 8 on bringing pollution to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity, and Target 13 on maintaining and



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safeguarding genetic diversity. Under our current business as usual trend, the drivers associated with agriculture account for about 70 per cent of the projected loss of terrestrial biodiversity by 2050. This loss is also undermining agriculture itself, which depends directly on biodiversity and the ecosystem services it supports. There is now consensus that agriculture needs to change. It needs to produce more – and more nutritious – food but much more efficiently and sustainably. Fortunately, there is agreement that solutions to sustainability in food systems exist and centre on three approaches: first, improving the ecological foundation of farming by conserving or restoring ecosystem services and thereby harnessing the considerable production efficiency gains on offer; second, creating biodiversity rich landscapes that are known to increase the resilience and productivity of farming and simultaneously deliver substantial biodiversity conservation benefits; and third, achieving sustainable consumption by reducing food waste and moving towards more sustainable and nutritious diets. Biodiversity is central to achieving all three of these outcomes. Small-scale and family farmers produce over 70 per cent of today’s food and represent the key target group for meeting future food demand in a sustainable way, as well as for achieving poverty reduction goals and improved social protection and welfare.

This year’s World Food Day coincides with the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Quebec in 1945. I take this opportunity to congratulate FAO on its significant contributions to eradicating hunger and poverty over this time. I am pleased to note that the Reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-2019 of FAO addresses agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, with its mutually reinforcing objectives to eradicate hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty while sustainably managing and using natural resources, as an important contribution to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Cooperation between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and FAO has strengthened even further in recent years, and we are currently working very closely, preparing for important considerations of biodiversity and sustainable food systems and agriculture scheduled to take place at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Cancun, Mexico, from 4 to 17 December 2016.

The conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity can provide solutions to a range of societal challenges, not least in rural areas where agriculture is the main driving force of the rural economy and, in some cases, of the whole economy.
