



# High-Level Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food Systems

Building on traditional knowledge  
to achieve Zero Hunger

7-9 November 2018,  
FAO Headquarters, Rome  
Red Room A121





## High-Level Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food Systems

Building on traditional knowledge to achieve Zero Hunger

### Background

Over the last few years, there has been increasing attention towards indigenous food systems and their holistic approach to food generation and resource management. At the international level, there have been extensive discussions to define sustainable food systems in relation to the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). For instance, both the Symposia on Agroecology organized by FAO in 2014 and 2018, and the 2017 FAO publication “The Future of food and agriculture – Trends and Challenges”, reflected on the importance of indigenous food systems, as well as on the on-going cognitive, epistemic and normative changes in the food systems debate.

In addition, the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) calls on the enhancement of sustainable food systems and on the importance of diversifying diets with nutritious foods, while broadening the existing food base and preserving biodiversity. Many of the existing indigenous food systems have been doing this for hundreds of years and can contribute to the current debate on sustainable food systems and resilience.

In 2009 and 2013, FAO released two key publications on the subject, respectively “Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems: the many dimensions of culture, diversity and environment for nutrition and health” and “Indigenous Peoples' food systems and well-being”, providing much needed insight on local traditional systems, their utilizations and the changes in dietary patterns in indigenous communities.

In 2015, indigenous representatives officially requested FAO to create an indigenous food systems group. This commitment was reaffirmed in April 2015 during the XIV Session the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

Since then, closer attention was paid at corporate level with the Strategic Programme 3 and the Indigenous Peoples Team leading the efforts that resulted in the development of a programme of work jointly prepared with the rest of FAO Strategic Programmes on indigenous food systems. Indigenous food systems cut across FAO’s different areas of work, being particularly relevant to



the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sustainable Food Systems Framework, the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, the UN Decade on Family Farming (2019-2028), Agroecology and the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS).

In December 2017, FAO and Bioversity International entered into an agreement to contribute to the overall food systems and climate change adaptation debate through analytical and field activities on indigenous food systems. Thanks to this agreement, and through a task force which included the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty, the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) and local indigenous organizations, different food systems across the world were profiled. The profiling looked at aspects such as: trends and dynamism of the indigenous food systems; the resilience to climate change; the role of traditional knowledge transmission; levels of sustainability of the territorial management practices; nutrition and food security; access to markets; and the use of energy and resources within the food system.

The results of this work will be presented and discussed during the High-level Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food Systems, which will be held at FAO headquarters from 7 to 9 November 2018. Within the frame of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and in the context of the 2019 International Year on Indigenous Languages (IYL), the seminar is co-organized with the Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC), the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Information and Documentation (DOCIP).

### Outcome and outputs of the expert seminar

The expert seminar will provide an opportunity to reflect on national and regional experiences, and to identify strategies to safeguard the preservation and transmission of ancestral knowledge to future generations in relation to indigenous food systems and climate-adapted crops.

The seminar will take a multi-stakeholder, multisectoral, multicultural and multidisciplinary approach to indigenous food systems, analysing different factors pertaining from production to utilization along the value chain, and discussing some of the key issues, including biodiversity, nutrition, marketing, land tenure, advocacy and sustainability.



The seminar will touch upon all the different areas of the work of FAO and of the Strategic Programme teams and will aim at contributing to ongoing efforts in the context of developing a Sustainable Food Systems Framework and to the work on the UN Decade of Action of Nutrition.

### Expected Outcome

Commitment at different levels and from different actors to strengthen the understanding, promotion and preservation of indigenous food systems as fundamental contribution to achieve Zero Hunger and the 2030 Agenda.

### Expected Outputs

#### *1. Working group on indigenous food systems transformed into an FAO Technical Network*

The FAO Technical Network will strengthen linkages between research institutions, universities, indigenous organizations and the UN. The Network will coordinate research activities, data compilation and repository, identification of resources for research and piloting at the field level, and advocacy. It will also coordinate and contribute to internal work in the context of sustainable food systems.

#### *2. Informal Action Network in the context of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition established*

The Informal Action Network, hosted by Member Countries, will provide a platform for countries to highlight the role that indigenous food systems can play in ensuring food security and nutrition, and to mobilise political support, share knowledge and good practices, discuss successes and challenges, and work to promote and preserve indigenous food systems and the foods and services generated by them, with the ultimate objective of improving food systems, diets and nutrition for all.

#### *3. Indigenous food systems incorporated in the food system debate in global, regional and national initiatives*

The seminar will guide the identification of areas of work on indigenous food systems to undertake the following activities:

1. Knowledge generation and sharing for climate change resilience and sustainability challenges.
2. At global level, advocacy for the inclusion, promotion and preservation of indigenous food systems within SDGs related programmes, the implementation of the UN Decade of Action of Nutrition, the UN Decade on Family Farming and in policy-making platforms such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the



Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Committee on Forestry (COFO), the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) and the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP).

#### 4. *Global programme on indigenous food systems launched*

With support from a group of countries, development partners, foundations and other interested parties, establish a global programme to continue learning, promoting and preserving indigenous food systems:

1. **LEARNING.** Continuing data gathering and lesson learning by expanding the implementation of the methodology for the profiling of indigenous food systems;
2. **PROMOTING.** Supporting advocacy activities in the context of indigenous food systems via the Indigenous Food System Working Group. For example, via dedicated webpage, data collection and repository etc.;
3. **PRESERVING:**
  - a. Supporting indigenous communities to sustainably manage their traditional food systems through small grants and provision of technical assistance, adapting to socio-economic and climate changes;
  - b. Supporting self-certification/ labelling mechanisms and other relevant mechanisms, and access to markets;
  - c. Supporting countries on the drafting and implementation of national policies aiming at preserving indigenous food systems.

**In collaboration with:**

