

A vision for biodiversity to ensure our Food Forever

A DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE

All of us depend on food, no matter where we live, or what we do. What we eat, in what quantity, and how that food is produced, can be the difference between life and death. It can maintain our health or ruin it. It can create high-value added employment opportunities or force farmers into subsistence. It can help protect our environment or contribute to its degradation. Food: our memories are made of it; we share it with both our loved ones and total strangers; and of course, we all have a favorite.

We have the world's farmers to thank for the rich variety of food tastes and experiences. Over many millennia, they have developed, grown and guarded the diversity of domesticated plants and animals. Every crop we eat consists of hundreds, if not thousands, of different varieties, each with unique characteristics.

While these crops and livestock originated in specific places, many have spread throughout the world. We are all interdependent beneficiaries in this continuing story of the movement of people, plants, and animals – always changing, evolving, mixing and matching in new ways.

The astonishing range of species and varieties cultivated by the farmers of the past and the present underpins the resilience of our food supply: our nutrition, food security, wellbeing and health depend on it.

Yet our common global heritage of food biodiversity is now at risk. Changing agricultural practices and increasing uniformity of our global food system is leading to rapid erosion of diversity from field to plate.

When we lose this diversity, we lose options for the future. The disappearance of one of the world's most valuable natural resources leaves our food systems vulnerable to the challenges that lie ahead, be they the production of sufficient food for an increasing population, climate change, new pests and diseases, or, indeed, all of the above.

Do we really want to lose the vast array of tastes, smells, colors and textures of food? The continued availability, affordability, and nutritional quality of these foods will be determined by the wise use of humankind's diverse agricultural biodiversity.

As citizens of the world, we hold these truths to be self-evident:

- That no one should suffer from hunger, food insecurity or malnutrition;
- That the productivity, nutritional quality and affordability of food is determined by sustainable utilization of crop and livestock diversity;
- That diversity in foods enriches the experience of degustation;
- That we must safeguard this diversity for future generations;
- That sharing of the benefits of this diversity and its associated knowledge is key.

The time to act is now! It is time to raise public awareness of the amazing benefits utilizing the world's biodiversity brings to humankind.

Ambitious concrete steps across the globe are required safeguard and equitably share our food diversity if our current pathway is to be modified. Mutually dependent on the world's precious resources, we resolve to act boldly and urgently to save the diversity that underpins our food, forever.