

***Rome, Italy, December 6 (Infosplusgabon) - " The recent increase in the number of hungry people in the world requires immediate action to reverse this situation, UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Director-General José Graziano da Silva told members of the Council on Monday.***

He noted that the latest hunger figure - 815 million people - marked the first increase after more than a decade of steady decline. Obesity and overweight are also growing, in developed and developing countries, posing another cost of current food systems, he noted, according to an FA statement.

"The most important thing to do now is to build the resilience of poor people to face the impacts of conflicts and climate change," making sure that humanitarian assistance is combined with development actions to chart a course towards the eradication of hunger by 2030, he said.

"This basically means new investments - I would say much more investments - from the public but also the private sector," Graziano da Silva said.

The FAO Council manages administrative and financial affairs between biennial meetings of the FAO Conference. Eight cabinet-level officials - from Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Zambia, Paraguay and the Russian Federation - are participating in the week-long

meeting, with side events focusing on climate change, migration and food safety as well as World Soil Day on Tuesday.

The statement said the Director-General outlined major events in 2018, including high-level international symposia on agroecology, on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, a third on innovation for smallholder and family farmers that is also in the works, and plans to launch an International Platform for Biodiversity.

Those initiatives are designed "to support countries to put in place sustainable agricultural practices that combine food production, ecosystem services and climate-change resilience at the same time", Graziano da Silva said.

Key opportunities "to put the fight against hunger back on track" come early in the year, at the African Union summit in Ethiopia and at FAO's regional conferences, including the first one to be held in Sudan.

The statement said during 2018, FAO will also act as co-chair of the Global Migration Group, comprised of 22 United Nations agencies and mandated to help draft - by the end of 2018 - a Global Compact on Safe, Regularly and Orderly Migration agreement.

As the Council reviews budgetary matters, Graziano da Silva also noted FAO's efforts to boost its focus and effectiveness through the development of five Strategic Programme teams as well as other institutional measures aimed at decentralization, at increased use of South-South and triangular cooperation and streamlining the Organization's country office network to assure greater flexibility in the use of budgeted resources.

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