

Media Update

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PRESS RELEASE

World Food Day 2020 marks FAO's 75th anniversary - calls for solidarity to support those who suffer from hunger and for the need to ensure healthy diets for all, as the country deals with the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic

16 October 2020, Islamabad: At the global World Food Day ceremony today, speakers called for solidarity to help all populations and to build back better by making food systems more robust and resilient. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) observed World Food Day 2020 in collaboration with the Ministry of National Food Security Research, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), World Food Program (WFP), Oxfam and IFAD.

This year's commemoration is being held at the National Agriculture Research Center (NARC) Auditorium in Islamabad, under the theme "Grow, nourish, sustain. Together". The focus is on the importance of healthy diets and the contribution of food heroes, particularly smallholder farmers, including women towards achieving "zero hunger" and fighting malnutrition in their communities. Considering the COVID-19 health measures' advice against physical gatherings, the event was held under strict COVID-19 SOPs. The event is attended by several experts and guests virtually. The primary aim of the day is to enhance public awareness about long-term global food challenges and to advance further national and international cohesion in the fight against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Chief Guest of the event, Syed Fakhar Imam the Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, while delivering his speech, stated that "Present Government fully appreciates the importance of agriculture in ensuring food security and we are focusing to ensure supply of key inputs fertilizer, seed,

pesticides at rational prices and endeavors to create an environment where farmers get a fair return to their produce.”

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations-FAO Representative in Pakistan, Ms. Mina Dowlatchahi highlighted the importance of reliable data and information to support targeted policies and collective action by government, civil society and private sector to address food insecurity and malnutrition in Pakistan, at a challenging time amidst COVID-19 pandemic impacts and natural hazards shocks and transboundary pests. Small holder farmers and off-farm agriculture workers, women and men, need to be able to access financial resources, knowledge, technology and innovation to produce and move “farm to fork” more, safer, and diversified food to improve livelihoods and diets of the people of Pakistan. She further added “Our future food systems need to ensure affordable and healthy diets for all, and decent livelihoods for food system workers, while preserving natural resources and biodiversity”.

On the occasion, Dr. Muhammad Azeem Khan, the Chairman, PARC, stressed that “we have compromised agriculture sector performance due to vagaries of climate change and food insecurity is one of the worst effects of climate change.” He added that PARC has successfully carried out research and now promoting foods which have high value of quality protein and rich source of minerals and vitamins like Talapia fish, Soybean and its products, food legumes dairy products etc. The Chairman was also of the view that to address the low productivity issues, PM Agriculture emergency program was launched for 13 major areas of agriculture worth 277 billion.

“The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) is humbled and honored to have been awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize. We are grateful as it shines a light on the importance of the right to food,” said Chris Kaye, Representative and Country Director WFP Pakistan. “WFP is committed to working together with the Government of Pakistan to provide the support needed by the most vulnerable and at-risk communities, to improve nutrition and build resilience”, Chris added.

Country Representative of IFAD Mr. Hubert Boirard ensured the organization’s commitment to contribute with the other UN agencies, the government and the development partners, to achieve the objective of Zero Hunger. He stated that “IFAD co-invests in rural people through its program of loans and grants (POLG) in partnership with Government of Pakistan and aims to sustainably eradicate rural poverty.

On the occasion, Country Director of Oxfam Pakistan Mr. Shahnawaz called for stronger cooperation in the face of global health and food security. The speakers at the event underscored the urgent need to step up collective efforts to reach the Zero Hunger goal.

Collective action across 150 countries makes World Food Day one of the most celebrated days of the UN calendar. The government, the private sector and civil society need to make sure that our food systems grow a variety of food to nourish a growing population and sustain the country together. To achieve a prosperous tomorrow, we need enriched production, enhanced nutrition, and a healthier environment; more importantly, we need every one of us—for a sustainable livelihood of all the people.