



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



ACTIVITY  
BOOK

Right to foods



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## World Food Day

Every year on 16 October, people from more than 150 countries come together to mark World Food Day (WFD). Since 1945, nations around the world have joined forces with the common goal of raising global awareness and taking action to end hunger and ensure healthy diets for all. FAO was founded on that day.

But WFD is YOUR day, too! Become a food hero and inspire others to take action to help create a more sustainable world where no one is left behind.

## Note to teachers

This Activity Book is aimed at a wide age range of young people interested in learning more about the right to foods for a better life and a better future. Although the general target age is 8-12 years, it could also be used to teach both younger and older students.

## Acknowledgements

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# Intro

Food is a fundamental human need. Life depends directly on food, as well as air and water, for everyone. A fundamental need becomes a right, which means it becomes something we can claim and demand loudly, just as we do as newborns when we cry loudly to say: 'I'm hungry!'.  

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The world produces enough food to feed the entire planet, yet hundreds of millions of people suffer from hunger.  

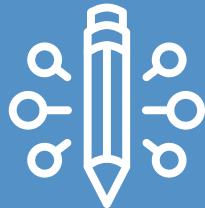
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How is this possible? The reasons, as we will see, are many. Climate disasters, conflicts, rising prices. However, the right to food is not just about quantity, but also quality.

Too many people worldwide cannot afford a healthy and varied diet. That's why this year's World Food Day is focused on the right to foods, in the plural. Not just one way of eating but many, different and healthy. Everyone has the right to a varied, nutritious, safe, affordable and easily accessible diet.



# WFD2024 Poster Contest



Participate in the World Food Day Poster Contest and express your creativity! Create a poster of your favourite dish or recipe that illustrates the importance of diverse, nutritious, safe, and accessible foods. Use your artistic skills to show us what it means to you, your community, or the planet.

To participate, go to:  
[www.fao.org/world-food-day/contest](http://www.fao.org/world-food-day/contest)

The contest is open to participants aged 5 to 19, and the deadline is 8 November 2024. The three winners for each age group will receive a certificate of recognition and a surprise gift bag and will be mentioned on the World Food Day website and FAO social media channels.



## The Right to Food

The United Nations was founded in 1945, after the Second World War, to preserve peace, security, and cooperation among the world's states.

Three years later, this great organization of nations wrote and signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that all human beings are equal and have the right to live a life free from want, fear, and discrimination.

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These principles are true for everyone, everywhere, that is why they are universal.

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Article 25 of the Declaration states that every person in the world deserves to live in health and dignity. It is their right. And the first element of a healthy life is food.



The right to food is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also other UN treaties, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is very important that fundamental rights are recognised, even if this does not automatically end the injustices of the world. These declarations are commitments that states have made and that individuals and communities can enforce whenever their rights are violated.

They are statements of common will that have legal value. At the same time, they show us a possible world where we can truly live in freedom and equality, a world that may still need to be built, but one that we must not stop imagining.

# What does it mean to eat well?

We all have the right to eat nutritious foods that allow us to grow and live a healthy and active life.

A healthy diet is **varied**. You can't always eat the same things!

It is **balanced** in quantity, composition, and calories - neither too few nor too many.

It is **adequate**, meaning it is appropriate for us, our age, our lifestyle.

It is **moderate** in the consumption of unhealthy food.

This means that every now and then you can indulge, but it should be the exception and not the rule.



There is not only one way to eat nutritiously because habits and foods vary from country to country.

Those who work at FAO know this well. FAO is the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which works in 130 countries around the world to ensure that everyone can eat nutritious food in the right quantity.

On the FAO website, you can find dietary guidelines for each country which are recommendations based on the foods available in different parts of the world.

# Malnutrition has different forms

When you don't eat enough and suffer from hunger, it's called undernutrition. Conflicts and climate disasters are among the main causes of hunger in the world.

If what we eat every day does not contain the right amount of nutrients we need, it's called nutrient deficiency. Even eating too much is malnutrition because even obesity can lead to very serious illnesses and death.



## Food safety and hygiene

Another important aspect is hygiene. The right to food also includes the safety of eating food that is not contaminated by bacteria, parasites, or other microorganisms. Contamination can come from soil, water, air, but also from transportation, storage, and the tools used for preparation. Food safety depends on producers, consumers, but also on governments that must make laws, control production, and educate citizens on how to eat safely.

## The right to choose

What we choose to eat depends on many things like our tastes, where we live, traditions, culture, religion, our cooking skills, and our habits. But two things are often decisive: how much the food costs and how easy it is to find. Sometimes, unfortunately, there is no choice because nutritious food is too expensive or too far away. This is why many people find it easier to eat food that is high in fat, salt, or sugar and low in vitamins, minerals, and other important substances for growing and living well.



# What threatens the right to food?

**Conflicts** bring not only death and destruction but also hunger. When communication routes are blocked, food stores are destroyed, and fields are devastated. The result is that in a short time many people no longer have enough food to live well. Often this situation lasts even beyond the end of conflicts and can threaten the healthy development of an entire generation of children.

**Climate change** is another threat to food security. Many human activities, such as deforestation and intensive animal farming, produce gases that warm the Earth. This makes the climate stranger and more unpredictable, and temperatures higher. Certain areas may be more affected by floods, while others may experience drought. Sometimes both situations alternate. This makes it harder to grow vegetables, raise animals, and even fish, as the seas are becoming more acidic.

**Economic insecurity**, rising prices, widespread poverty are often the result of conflicts or climate disasters. It should be considered that three-quarters of the poor in the world are farmers, herders, or fishers. They produce more than half of the global agricultural production and are particularly at risk of disasters, conflicts, and extreme weather events.



# A very delicate chain

We can imagine food production as a large chain that starts from cultivated fields and livestock, continues in companies that process raw materials and then distribute the products for sale, and ends up in our homes. All these steps are crucial to ensure the right to food worldwide and make up the **agrifood system**.

Every link in this chain has effects on the surrounding environment. For example, intensive and polluting crops threaten **biodiversity**, the variety of species present in the world. Every living organism has a purpose. Life on Earth is a tightly woven web that holds itself together through the combined actions of all species, plants and animals.

The problem is that in the last century food production for humans has increased greatly and weakened this web using dangerous fertilizers and pesticides, polluting the soil, water, and air, and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, the same gases that cause climate change.

Therefore, the large chain of agrifood systems is threatened by climate change and biodiversity loss, but at the same time, it has contributed to causing them.

To defend everyone's right to healthy and varied foods, food systems must be more **sustainable**, capable of ensuring resources for the present and the future.



# When present hunger leads to future hunger: child labour



About 112 million children worldwide work, mostly in agriculture. It's work that takes place in fields or forests to collect wood, but also in livestock, fishing, and aquaculture. Many farming families are forced to make their children work to ensure food for everyone. Some agricultural tasks are educational and useful, as long as they don't take up too much time and don't prevent them from studying. If, however, the work is harmful, if it's tiring, if it lasts too many hours a day, the health and development of these children will be threatened. This endangers the future of entire communities, which will continue to live in poverty and hunger. It is necessary to break this harmful cycle by providing alternatives and effectively enforcing labour laws.

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How though? Solutions exist.

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**Governments** must protect populations during periods of crisis to ensure everyone has access to natural resources such as land, water, forests, fishing, and livestock. It is important that in emergencies decision-makers collaborate with non-governmental organizations and humanitarian agencies to ensure safe and undisturbed access to food aid for affected communities, as required by international law.

But there are not only emergencies. Actions for the future are also needed. This is why those who have the power to decide must support scientific research and projects that help farmers work better, producing enough food without harming the environment and the planet.

Laws and regulations are needed to protect the soil from overexploitation, limit the emissions of gases that warm the atmosphere, protect biodiversity, and waters. Above all, these laws must be truly enforced. Strict control is also needed on the products that are sold. Governments must enforce laws that ensure health safety and clear communication about food composition. There should also be laws that limit the percentage of fats, sugars, and salt in processed products.

**Private companies** can and must do a lot. First of all, they must invest in sustainable agriculture, sharing effective methods and technologies, especially in countries where the right to food is most at risk. They must commit to reducing food waste at every stage of the food system chain. Those who process food should work with public health in mind, producing healthy food and avoiding advertisements that mislead consumers.



Look at the illustration to find the hidden icons of FAO's Four Betters before reading the information on page 14.





# The United Nations

The United Nations has set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. What does sustainable development mean? To sustain means to support, and development means to grow. These global goals aim to address the impact that community growth and living practices have had on nature. We need to learn how to support and grow in ways that do not harm the environment. Therefore 193 states of the world have joined forces to ease the impact of our actions on the planet. The 17 goals cover every aspect of life on Earth and FAO is committed to many of them. The right to food relates to many SDGs because in the near future we will need to ensure a dignified and healthy life for all people without harming the planet.



## The right to food relates to:

1 NO POVERTY



No Poverty

2 ZERO HUNGER



Zero Hunger

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Reduce Inequalities

13 CLIMATE ACTION



Climate Action

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

FAO is committed to four main streams of action:



- **Better production:**

Transforming agrifood systems to make them more sustainable, more resilient to crises, and reducing waste.



- **Better nutrition:**

Ensuring communities have the means to feed themselves healthily and sufficiently.



- **Better environment:**

Working to ensure the right to food worldwide is respected without burdening the environment and climate.



- **Better life:**

Providing assistance to the most vulnerable communities, developing their capacities to fight hunger and malnutrition, and thus improving everyone's life.

# Some FAO actions

**Guidelines for a correct diet.** In 2004, FAO wrote a list of suggestions for citizens and specific recommendations for governments on how to practically implement the principles of the right to food through political programmes and laws. They also show how the right to food is linked to access to natural resources such as land or water, education, markets, and assistance during crises.

[www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-dietary-guidelines](http://www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-dietary-guidelines)

**One Health.** The *One Health* programme aims to protect the health of all living beings on the planet. Life on Earth is all connected, it is a web in which every element is important. Food safety is also connected to this web. For example, FAO collaborates with governments to study how to combat bacterial contamination in food in an intelligent way, without destroying other forms of life and avoiding creating new antibiotic-resistant bacteria.



**Conflicts, natural disasters, emergencies.** FAO helps affected populations rebuild livelihoods and works in communities hosting displaced people to promote inclusion and strengthen bonds between people.

**Information campaigns.** Through a coordinated series of messages and communications, FAO and governments disseminate verified data on food, nutrition worldwide, the challenges to be faced, and propose possible solutions.

**Food education programs.** FAO collaborates with governments, schools, and universities to teach the principles of a healthy diet. It initiates programs to teach how to grow gardens at school and at home, giving children and adults the tools they need to feed themselves.

**School canteens.** An important and very effective activity is the organization of canteens in the schools of agricultural communities. FAO, in agreement with local governments, creates a network of collaboration between schools and local farmers to ensure a nutritious meal for children every day, creating jobs and thus means of living for many families.



# What can we do?

## Raise our voice

We too can do our part by raising awareness. We can join together to put pressure on governments. We can write, we can share information, we can talk to people to build a future where the right to healthy and adequate food is guaranteed for everyone.

## Choose local and seasonal foods

When you can, choose to eat a lot of fresh and seasonal fruits and vegetables every day and find ways to add more legumes, nuts, and whole grains to your diet. Legumes and nuts are excellent sources of plant proteins. They are also kinder to our planet because they require less water to be produced.

## Adopt healthy habits

Our habits can be contagious! If we eat nutritiously, we encourage others to do the same. Even just by example, we can spread awareness and contribute to the well-being of individuals and the general improvement of public health.

## Defend biodiversity

We can vary our diet by adding traditional, locally grown, and seasonal foods to support biodiversity. There are many very nutritious and tasty recipes to cook meals using these ingredients.



## Learn the FAO guidelines of our country

The guidelines for healthy eating provide advice on the nutrients needed to avoid chronic diseases. FAO helps countries' governments to implement these suggestions, which are also used to establish educational programmes and make political decisions about food.

## Learn to read labels

Food labels help us choose nutritious and different foods by providing information about energy (usually calories) and substances such as salt, sugar, and fats. Through labels, we also understand if our food is safe to eat. If the label says "Best before...", the food can still be eaten for a few days after that date, while "Use by..." means the food becomes dangerous after the stated date.

## Practice food safety

We must wash our hands with soap and water before handling any food. This simple action helps prevent the spread of harmful bacteria and reduces the risk of foodborne illnesses. Foods like poultry, meat, eggs, and unpasteurized milk should be cooked well to kill any bacteria or other pathogens. Frozen meat, fish, or poultry should be thawed in the refrigerator before cooking. Raw meat, poultry, seafood should be kept away from other foods to avoid cross-contamination and the spread of harmful bacteria. When preparing food, we use one cutting board or plate for raw meat, poultry, and seafood and a separate cutting board or plate for other foods that will not be cooked.

## Reduce food waste

With simple actions, we can respect nature, farmers, and our agrifood systems. We carefully plan our meals, choose creative recipes to minimize food waste, and compost organic matter instead of throwing it in landfills.

## Support local food heroes

Food heroes are people identified by FAO who work along agrifood systems, providing food to people, even under difficult circumstances. We can also be food heroes in our own way if we spread information and talk about the right to food at school, with family, and friends.

## Give a hand

If we can, we make a donation or offer our time to support people in need during humanitarian crises. Whether it's contributing funds, volunteering in shelters, or providing essential supplies, our actions can provide help and comfort to those facing crises.



# Stories

My name is **Maimuna** and I live in Borno State, Nigeria. In 2014, I had to flee from Gambaru Ngala after a terrible attack by rebels, to find refuge in Zabarmari. I was alone with eight children and it was difficult to feed them every day. Then I participated in an FAO programme and learned to prepare Tom Brown, a powdered porridge made of millet, soybeans, peanuts, and smoked fish that helps combat malnutrition in children and nursing women. FAO distributes it for free to displaced people, but since it is very good, many want to buy it. Now I work with other women and I can imagine a future for me and my children.



I am **Irene** and I work at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. In my country, many young people get sick and sometimes die due to poor nutrition. Many years ago, the diet of Fijians was mostly composed of tubers and plantains, now too many fats, sugars, and salt are consumed. The My Kana app ("food" in my language) that FAO introduced together with my country's government to spread information about food composition, how to make a home garden, and how to follow a healthy diet. My job is to improve this app. I like the idea of doing my part to address a difficult problem.



Hi, my name is **Anatolii** and I live in Ukraine. I manage FAO projects for the distribution of materials, seeds, and everything needed to restart the work of small agricultural enterprises affected by the conflict. We also help find specific solutions for various problems, depending on the damage caused by the bombings. Behind every company that starts working again, there are families that resume living almost normally. My role is organizational, but I like to maintain personal contact with the people who receive support. Inspiring trust for tomorrow is what I like most about my job.

I am **Jerry**, the president of the farmers' cooperative of the indigenous villages of Redi Doti and Pierre Kondre in Suriname. In our area, we cultivate many varieties of pineapple with traditional systems that do not harm the soil and do not poison the environment. These methods are passed down from generation to generation, and the result is delicious! The problem is that with these systems, we do not always manage to produce a sufficient harvest. Recently, FAO, together with other UN agencies, has worked to transform the entire agrifood system of the area, allowing us to produce more organic and sustainable pineapples, reducing waste, and allowing the whole community to live better.



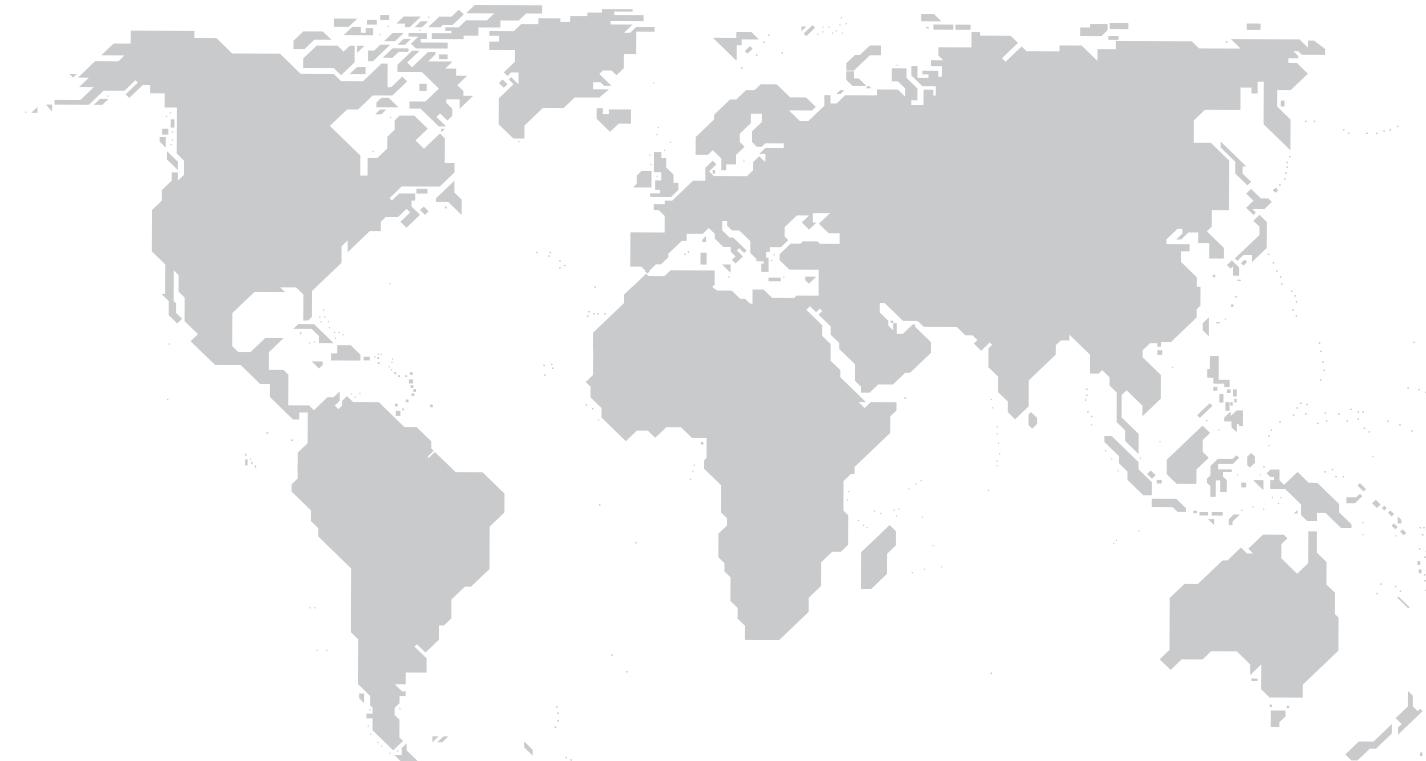
Now it's your turn!

1. Where do Maimuna, Irene, Anatolii, and Jerry come from? Place each story's protagonist in their country of origin with an arrow.



Maimuna Irene Anatolii Jerry

2. What were the eating habits in your country many years ago? Ask an elderly person you know. What did they eat during their childhood? What has changed? Compare the answers with those obtained from your classmates:



3. Pinocchio is always looking for food; Hansel and Gretel is a fairy tale about hunger and abundance; Anansi and the pot of beans is about greed. Can you think of other stories, poems, films, or songs in your country or region that partly deal with the theme of food? Make a list of titles.



Would you like to see with your own eyes how much sugar is in soft drinks? With the help of an adult, boil 200 ml of soda in a small pot. After about ten minutes, the water will begin to evaporate, and the sugar will start to caramelize.

Let the water evaporate completely and then transfer the caramelized sugar onto a sheet of parchment paper and let it cool. You will have made a candy that tastes like your favourite soda.

# Experiments

A healthy diet consists of the right amount of different food groups. These major groups are made up of many foods that can vary depending on the country or area of the world we live in. What are the ones you usually eat?

Draw examples for each group. To learn more about the different food groups, read the Activity Book: **Healthy eating matters**

## cereals



## legumes



## fruits and vegetables



tubers and  
plantains



dairy  
products



meat, fish,  
and eggs



fats and oils



# Activity Book Series

Download the FAO Activity Book series and prepare activities or lessons on important global issues at the centre of the organization's work: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0947en>



► Water is life, water is food



► Climate Action.  
Maria's Story



► Leave no one behind



► Our actions are our future



► Changing the future  
of migration



► Working for Zero Hunger



► The climate is changing



► Food Heroes



► Healthy plants for  
a healthy planet



► Eating healthy  
is important



► Your Guide to FAO



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**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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Rome, Italy

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