

New UN food czar: Need small farms, not 'industrial ag' to feed the world

Modern industrial agricultural methods can no longer feed the world, due to the impacts of overlapping environmental and ecological crises linked to land, water and resource availability.

The stark warning comes from the new United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Prof Hilal Elver, in her first public speech since being appointed in June. "Food policies which do not address the root causes of world hunger would be bound to fail", she told a packed audience in Amsterdam.

One billion people globally are hungry, she declared, before calling on governments to support a transition to "agricultural democracy" which would empower rural small farmers. Agriculture needs a new direction: agroecology. "The 2009 global food crisis signalled the need for a turning point in the global food system", she said at the event hosted by the Transnational Institute (TNI), a leading international think tank.

"Modern agriculture, which began in the 1950s, is more resource intensive, very fossil fuel dependent, using fertilisers, and based on massive production. This policy has to change.

"We are already facing a range of challenges. Resource scarcity, increased population, decreasing land availability and accessibility, emerging water scarcity, and soil degradation require us to re-think how best to use our resources for future generations."

The UN official said that new scientific research increasingly shows how 'agroecology' offers far more environmentally sustainable methods that can still meet the rapidly growing demand for food.

"Agroecology is a traditional way of using farming methods that are less resource oriented, and which work in harmony with society. New research in agroecology allows us to explore more effectively how we can use traditional knowledge to protect people and their environment at the same time."

Read full original article: [UN: only small farmers and agroecology can feed the world](#)