

## ‘Prioritize science and innovation to revamp agrifood systems’: New head of UN Food and Agricultural Organization urges global commitment to new breeding techniques

Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the [United Nations](#) (FAO), Qu Dongyu, has made an urgent call for the transformation of agrifood systems, to make them more inclusive, economically viable and resilient to multiple shocks, as well as to produce better and more with less negative impact on the environment.

Qu was addressing a ministerial meeting held on [May 18] at the [United Nations](#) in New York entitled “Global [Food Security](#) Call to Action.”

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other ‘disruptive’ innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

“First, we must scale up emergency agricultural assistance,” he said. “Currently only eight per cent of all [food security](#) funding in emergencies goes to assist agricultural production,” he noted, emphasising that investing in agriculture and rural livelihoods is strategic, and seven to 10 times more cost-effective than traditional assistance.

FAO seeks \$1.5 billion to support 50 million people in 2022 with urgent agricultural interventions to address acute hunger.

Second, it is vital to invest in agrifood systems as well as hard infrastructure (roads, irrigation, electrification and digital) and value chain infrastructure (storage facilities, cooling facilities, banking infrastructure and insurance infrastructure).

Growth in the agriculture sector is a sure-fire way to cut poverty and hunger in many middle- to low-income countries, the Director-General said.

Third, science and innovation must be prioritized to revamp agrifood systems.

The Director-General highlighted the role of cutting-edge innovations in agriculture, such as new breeding techniques to boost crop yields, desired traits, and climate resilience, as well as digital agriculture that can significantly reduce market failures in agriculture and improve the functioning of the agricultural markets.

Fourth, the world must reduce food loss and waste, Qu said. Currently, the high amounts of food loss and waste could feed around 1.26 billion people per year.

“If we reduce food loss and waste by 50 per cent, there would be sufficient fruits and vegetables available in the food supply to cover the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables per person per day,” the Director-General said.

**[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here](#)**