

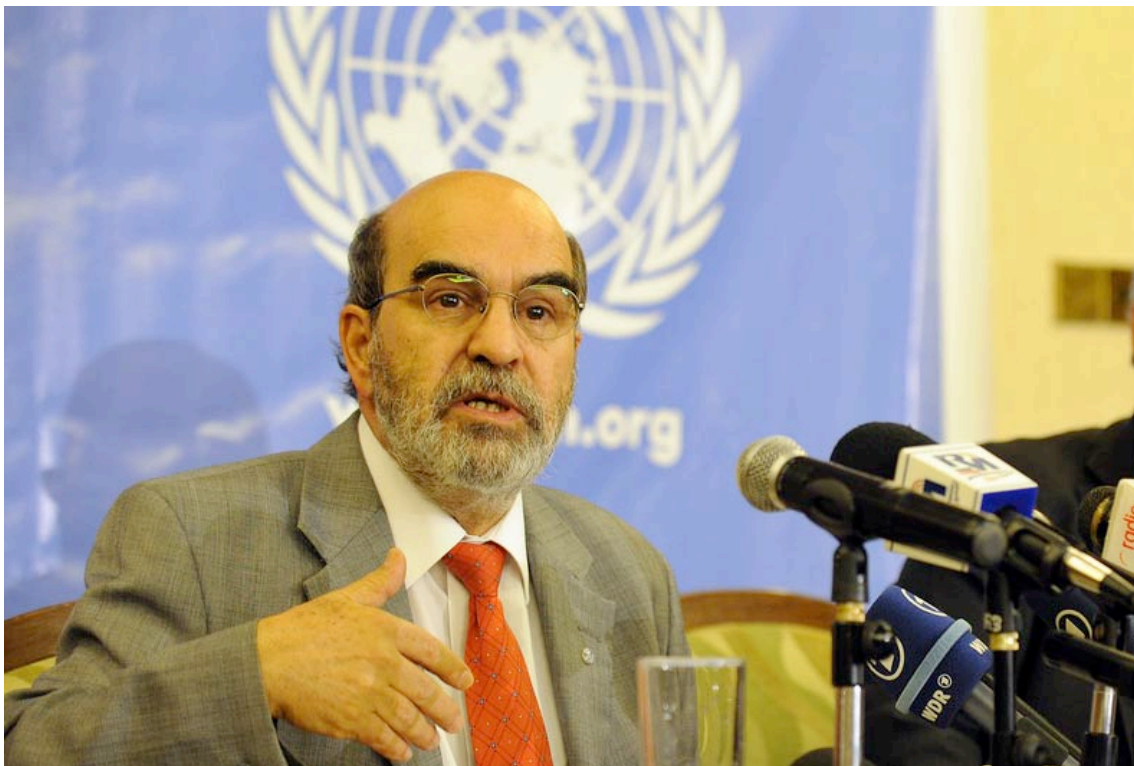


With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



Ending hunger critical to ensuring development that is sustainable – UN official



FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva. Photo: FAO/Simon Maina

19 April 2012 –

The world must tackle the urgent challenge of ending hunger if it is to ensure a model of development that is sustainable over the long term, the head of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) stressed today.

“We cannot call development sustainable if we are leaving almost one in every seven people behind, victims of undernourishment,” Director-General José Graziano da Silva [told](#) participants at FAO’s biennial regional conference that began in Baku, Azerbaijan. “I am convinced ending hunger is a possible goal, with true political commitment. FAO is committed to this effort.”

The conference brings together government ministers and senior officials from the countries of Europe and Central Asia to discuss food security, agriculture, fisheries, and forestry issues. It will also decide on FAO's future work programme in the region.

In his remarks, Mr. Graziano da Silva highlighted several areas requiring concerted action, including adopting more sustainable production approaches and technologies to produce more food with less impact, and shifting to healthier diets to tackle the emerging problem of obesity and reduce pressure on natural resources essential to food production.

Turning to the particular challenges for Europe, he noted the food security and nutritional challenges it faces. Although most European countries experience malnutrition rates under five per cent, there are pockets of particular concern, such as the Caucasus and Central Asia, where undernourishment and poverty rates remain high.

While FAO projects that this situation will improve over the coming decades, it also warns that a rise in obesity and diet-related illnesses will emerge as major problems – a key finding of a report the agency released yesterday ahead of the conference.

The report also warned that as diets shift from cereals towards higher consumption of meat and dairy, the risk factors behind chronic, non-communicable diseases could rise in parts of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

In addition to diet, the report said that lifestyle habits, poverty and medical care also influence obesity, disease and death rates, and that these increased risk levels will place greater pressure on healthcare facilities in the poorer countries of Central Asia than in the European Union.

The two-day conference will also look at what agricultural policies can help boost crop production to both address food security as well as combat rural poverty.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[UN food agency warns of looming health threats in Europe and Central Asia](#)