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UN agency seeks to boost role of indigenous peoples in fight against hunger



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26 November 2010 – The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) is seeking to boost cooperation and dialogue with the world’s indigenous populations in the fight against hunger.

The new “FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples” aims to ensure that indigenous people are given more consideration in all relevant aspects of the agency’s work.

“With the preparation of this policy paper, FAO aspires to play an important role in the international community's efforts to ensure a better life for indigenous peoples and rural populations,” [said](#) FAO Director General Jacques Diouf in the preface to the report. “The fight against hunger cannot be won without them.”

The policy is designed to foster better exchange of knowledge and ideas between indigenous populations and the Rome-based organization. It gives guidance to the agency’s headquarters and regional staff, urging more systematic and responsible engagement with indigenous peoples.

Issues such as land tenure, sustainable resource management and the preservation of traditional knowledge and food systems are of particular importance. Indigenous populations possess specialized knowledge about natural resources and diversity and often have coping strategies for the effects of climate change.

FAO's new policy notes that the erosion of traditional skills possessed by indigenous people works against efforts to achieve food security and sustainable development. With indigenous and tribal peoples comprising around five per cent of the world's population but about 15 per cent of the world's poorest people, they are particularly at risk of a failure to address the problems.

A number of UN agencies worked together closely with indigenous representatives to formulate the new policy, which is based on international legal instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007.

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