



WORLD FOOD DAY 2024: THE RIGHT TO FOOD, BETTER LIFE, AND BETTER FUTURE, LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

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Today, we gather to celebrate World Food Day 2024, an annual event dedicated to recognizing and ensuring that everyone has access to the **RIGHT TO FOOD FOR A BETTER LIFE AND A BETTER FUTURE**. This day also serves as a reminder of the 733 million people who do not have enough to eat due to climate change, poverty, and economic downturns, including the 27,000 people displaced by earthquakes, landslides, and ongoing conflicts in parts of the highlands. We must also remember the 2.8 billion people who cannot afford a healthy diet and those suffering from obesity amidst rising global obesity rates.

In 2015, governments worldwide united with the goal of achieving zero hunger by 2030. In 2016, 177 countries signed the Paris Agreement on climate change, committing to climate action. However, nine years later, we have not yet achieved our global aim of reducing hunger for a better life and a better future.

Climate change is threatening the livelihoods of rural populations. In Papua New Guinea, 87% of people live in rural areas, and depend on agriculture for their food and livelihoods. PNG faces several challenges including gender disparities and socio-economic disparities between rural and urban areas. PNG's Gender Inequality Index has worsened over the last few years, ranking it at 161 out of 162 countries. The current agrifood system cannot address food insecurity, with over 56% of households worrying about insufficient food, 49.5% of children being stunted, 14.1% suffering from wasting, 13.7% being overweight, and 48% being anaemic. The rate of chronic malnutrition in children under five years has remained unchanged since 1983, and the prevalence of overweight and obesity among adults has increased, contributing to increasing incidences of non-communicable diseases.

We therefore must make concerted efforts to build resilience in the face of these challenges, including threats from climate change and or other man-made disasters to produce enough food for everyone. Climate change and man-made conflicts or disasters threaten the availability, access, use, and stability of food. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events disrupt food production and threaten food prices.

The governments vision to transform the lives of people through various national policy platforms such as the country's Vision 2050, Development Strategic Plan 2030 (DSP 2030), Medium Term Development Plan IV 2023 -2027 and the National Agriculture Sector Plan 2024 -2033 are roadmaps to a better future. PNG has localised SDGs into the country's development programs through the sectoral plans and programs guided by the National development planning frameworks.

Promoting sustainable agricultural practices is crucial. These practices not only boost productivity and income for smallholders but also enhance resilience to extreme weather and protect natural resources. By promoting sustainable agriculture innovations tailored to the local context, farmers and smallholders can achieve considerable productivity and income gains while increasing the resilience of their agricultural activities and income to extreme and variable weather. Sustainable agricultural practices can halt and even reverse the over-exploitation of natural resources and degradation of ecosystems.

To conclude, let us continue to take a holistic approach to transforming our food systems and advocate to ensure all Papua New Guineans know their right to food and a better future leaving no one behind. In addition, collaborative platforms, improved partnership networking and resource mobilization and sharing are established to enhance government's effort for national food and nutrition security for all Papua New Guineans.

Together, we can build a better life, and a better future!

