Latin America and the Caribbean in the fight against hunger

Representatives of the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean are meeting in Mexico City from 29 February to 3 March at the Regional Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO, to deepen their efforts sets to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.

The Regional Conference is the governing body of FAO in the region. It meets every two years and she governments analyze the main challenges of the regional food security and establish priorities for FAO for the next two years.

According to FAO, over the last two decades, Latin America and the Caribbean has made extraordinary progress in reducing hunger, becoming the region that has made most progress worldwide.

More than 31.7 million people have overcome hunger in the region since 1990-92, an average of 1.3 million people per year. Most of this decline occurred between 2000 and 2008, when about 19 million people overcame hunger.

"This shows us how much we can advance quickly if governments give political priority to this issue," said Regional Representative of FAO, Raul Benitez, noting that the agreements reached at the Regional Conference will allow progress towards the goal zero hunger and malnutrition.

Pending challenges on the path towards zero hunger

Although it has taken huge leaps forward, the region still faces major challenges: 34 million people still live in hunger while obesity affects 22% of the regional population, and about four million children are overweight.

"We have to fight the two faces of malnutrition, moving towards sustainable patterns of production and healthy consumption habits and diets bailing products originating in this region," said Benitez.

To address these challenges, FAO will present governments with a regional initiative aimed at supporting policies, plans and strategies to eradicate hunger and malnutrition countries.

FAO will work with major food security arrangements in the region, including Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative Without Hunger 2025, the Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication of CELAC, the Hunger Eradication Plan of ALBA Petrocaribe, Mesoamerica Hunger and Parliamentary Fronts against Hunger, among others.

Climate change: a regional emergency

Another key issue to be discussed by countries during the conference will be the need to increase regional efforts to tackle climate change and halt the degradation of natural resources.

"Climate change affects us all, but for the Caribbean and Small Island Developing States, is not just a matter of policy but a matter of life or death," said Benitez.

FAO will propose a regional initiative focused on sustainable eluso of natural resources, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management to the Conference.

Combat outbreaks of poverty

In rural areas of the region, poverty affects almost half of the population, so the third initiative that FAO propose to countries during the conference will focus on strengthening family farming and create inclusive food systems development sustainable rural.

Family farming is undoubtedly the basis of regional food system. Not only it produces most of the food, but it generates the most employment in rural areas.

"Encouraging family farming will allow combat malnutrition with fresh and healthy food, improving the diversity of diets and reducing dependence on imports and vulnerability to economic and natural shocks," said Raul Benitez.

Source: FAO