



2 FEBRUARY 2022

13:00-14:40 (CET)

MEDITERRANEAN DIET'S PRINCIPLES FOR AGENDA 2030

Secrets of the Tomato:

Exploring the cultural roots, health benefits and economic potential of that wonderful little fruit called tomato

Background information

The Italian Permanent Representation to the UN Agencies in Rome and the FAO GIAHS Programmeⁱ Secretariat are pleased to invite you to the webinar: *“Secrets of the Tomato – Exploring the cultural roots, health benefits and economic potential of that wonderful little fruit called tomato”*.

This online event is part of the initiative “Mediterranean Diet’s Principles for Agenda 2030”, a series of thematic sessions promoted by the Italian Permanent Representation that aim to raise awareness on how the Mediterranean Diet can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The event is also relevant to the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (IYFV) which was celebrated in 2021 to enhance and promote the important role of fruits and vegetables in human nutrition, food security, environmental and human health and as well in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Tomatoes are one of the most produced and consumed fruits worldwide. Currently, the global production of fresh tomatoes amounts to approximately 180 million tons per yearⁱⁱ. One quarter of those (some 39 million tons) are grown for the industry, which makes tomatoes the world’s leading fruit for processing. Over the past 20 years, tomato has been increasingly present on our plates, confirming the importance of their role in the eating habits of many countries and cultures.

Tomatoes, apart from being amazingly versatile and basically part of the cuisines all over the world in any possible way (just think about tomato sauce, tomato juice and gazpacho), are an important cultural symbol, inextricably connected with our history, our culinary traditions as a



true heritage of humankind. This is particularly true in territorialized food systems, such as the ones recognized by FAO under the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). In these outstanding examples of sustainable food systems, based on strong cultural identity and sense of belonging of a community with its territory, agricultural production goes far beyond the sole need of addressing basic needs. The entire environment, the maintenance of local agrobiodiversity, social systems and landscapes, are influenced by culture, cuisine, rituals, and history.

Furthermore, tomatoes are a pillar of the Mediterranean Diet and other traditional diets as well. They are not only a major source of the antioxidants, which help reduce risk of cholesterolⁱⁱⁱ, heart disease^{iv} and cancer^v, but also contain fibers, vitamin C, beta carotene, potassium, folate, and vitamin K. There are thousands of tomato varieties grown around the world and many of them are heritage and heirloom varieties. They come in a variety of shapes, flavors and colors, including yellow, orange, green, and purple. However, as many other fruits, tomatoes are sensitive to droughts^{vi}, pests and diseases, which can discourage small-scale production.^{vii} Moreover, a study found that the quest for improved and higher-yielding varieties is behind the loss of taste of tomatoes in the past decades.^{viii}

While unique products such as wine and olive oil are easily distinguished to wide public, horticultural products have less visibility as such, limiting their potential to make a certain agricultural system more recognizable. This event is organized in the framework of the initiative “Mediterranean Diet’s Principles for Agenda 2030”, following the approach of the FAO GIAHS Programme that highlights the linkages between production and traditional diets, agrobiodiversity, culture and exploration of potential ways for sustainable rural development.

Objectives of the Webinar

- Explore how we can incentivize small-scale sustainable tomato production, and sustainable fruits and vegetable production in general, especially of local varieties (including through international recognitions such as the FAO GIAHS Programme).
- Analyze cultural aspects of the tomato, from their origins to the ways we consume them today.
- Raise awareness of the economic, social and health benefits that the tomato can bring to our communities.
- Explore how shorter fruits and vegetables value chains and local markets can help avoid food crises in the face of sudden shock and unforeseen events.



Agenda

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Opening session | | |
| 13:00-13:10 <i>Moderator: H.E. Vincenza Lomonaco, Permanent Representative of Italy to the U.N. Agencies in Rome</i> | | |
| 13:00-13:05 | H.E. Ettore Sequi, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy (Video Message) | |
| 13:05-13:10 | Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, FAO | |
| Session 1: The role of tomato in diets, local economy, and agro-biodiversity | | |
| 13:10-13:55 <i>Moderator: Yoshihide Endo, GIAHS Coordinator, FAO</i> | | |
| 13:10-13:17 | Exploring Cultural Roots of Tomato (Video Message) | <i>Tomato Museum of Parma</i> |
| 13:17-13:24 | The contribution of tomato to food and nutrition security | <i>Fatima Hachem, Senior Nutrition Officer, ESN, FAO</i> |
| 13:24-13:31 | The role of innovation for sustainable agriculture: the case of “PRIMA, observatory of innovation” (Video Message) | <i>Prof. Angelo Riccaboni, Full Professor at University of Siena</i> |
| 13:31-13:38 | Conservation of traditional varieties of tomato from the global perspective. From seeds to the plate | <i>Arshiya Noorani, role and organization</i> |
| 13:38-13:45 | Tomato industry in Italy and in the world: new perspectives towards environmental and social sustainability | <i>Mr. Marco Serafini, President of ANICAV (Italian Association Vegetable Food Preserves Manufacturers)</i> |
| 13:45-13:52 | Geographical Indication Systems as a tool to promote local economic development | <i>Prof. Silvia Scaramuzzi, Associate Professor at University of Florence</i> |



Session 2: Socio-cultural and production aspects of tomato. Cases from the world

13:55-14:35 Moderator: Ms. Rosa Laura Romeo, Mountain Partnership

| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| 13:55-14:03 | Japanese consumption of tomato and its products | Dr. Hiroyuki SUGANUMA , General Manager Nature & Wellness Research Department, Innovation Division, KAGOME CO.LTD, Japan |
| 14:03-14:11 | Tomato production in the Valencia GIAHS site (family farming, local varieties, significance in agricultural production) | Dr. María Dolores Raigón , Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain |
| 14:11-14:19 | Role and contribution of tomato in local production in the GIAHS site of Djebba Suspended gardens | Faouzi Djebbi , Tunisia |
| 14:19-14:27 | Traditional varieties of tomato and their use in local diets in Indonesia | Dr. Rini Murtiningsih Researcher, Agriculture Research and Development Agency, Indonesia |
| 14:27-14:35 | Cultural, gastronomic and environmental aspects of tomato in Mexico, as a center of domestication | Dr. Mahinda Martínez , Professor-Researcher, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Autonomous University of Querétaro |

14:35-14:40 Closing remarks: Maximo Torero Cullen, Chief Economist, FAO



Expected Participants

- Officers from Ministries and National Institutions
- Representatives from Regional and Local Governments
- Universities and research centers
- Representatives and focal points from GIAHS countries
- Members of the Alliance for the Promotion of the Principles of the Mediterranean Diet
- Officers from UN agencies and programs
- NGOs
- Potential partners

Meeting Format: Online event

Registration: [LINK](#)

Languages: 6 FAO Official Languages and Italian

References

ⁱ The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) is a Programme of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that aims to identify, support and safeguard agricultural, forestry, livestock and fish production systems of global importance. The Programme aims to enhance livelihoods, agrobiodiversity, landscapes, knowledge systems and cultures that characterize traditional agriculture systems.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.fao.org/3/cb2395en/cb2395en.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22965217/>

^{iv} <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22158914/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23045517/>

^v <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10050865/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12424325/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12010859/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22760559/>

^{vi} Jintao Cui, & Guangcheng Shao, & Jia Lu, & Keabetswe, Larona & Hoogenboom, Gerrit. (2020). Yield, quality and drought sensitivity of tomato to water deficit during different growth stages. *Scientia Agricola*. 77. 10.1590/1678-992x-2018-0390.

^{vii} https://www.biodiversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user_upload/online_library/publications/pdfs/NUS_2013_Book_of_abstracts_1686.pdf

^{viii} <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/jan/27/out-of-flavour-why-tomatoes-have-lost-their-taste>