Join Us In Cooking Our Way To A Better Food Future

Why is biodiversity key for the future of food

Energy or transport systems are often thought of as the main causes of environmental damage but in fact, the biggest impact on the health of our planet comes from our food system – specifically what we eat and how we produce it. The statistics are staggering: Around one third of greenhouse gas emissions and sixty percent of global biodiversity losses are connected to our production and consumption practices.

While this is alarming it can also be empowering. We all eat three times a day. That’s three opportunities to make a food choice that is better for the planet and your health. By demanding lesser-known, diverse ingredients from sustainable sources we can help shift the food system. This agricultural diversity is good for soil health, adds nutritional value to our diets, builds climate resilience and can also open up new routes to market for small-holder farmers and specialist producers.

What’s on your plate

The scientific study Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems and WWF’s Livewell report, highlighted that eating a greater variety of plant-based foods from sustainable sources could have a beneficial effect on our health as well as help safeguard the planet’s rich biodiversity.

Of the more than 30,000 edible plant species, we only currently eat between 150 and 200 of them. Even more surprising, over 60% of our calories come from just 4 crops – rice, maize, wheat and potato. Choosing to eat underused and lesser-known plant species can improve nutrient intake and build greater resilience into a food system threatened by over simplification and climate change.

For example, adding a lesser-known and highly nutritious crop like moringa to the menu or swapping rice with purple yam, not only adds greater flavour to the plate, it can actually help achieve the UNs’ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.5 and Aichi targets which focus on maintaining genetic biodiversity as a central part of a healthy food system. This is a win-win for taste, health and the planet.
The Campaign

Food Forever and the Chefs’ Manifesto are joining forces to launch the 2020 for 2020 campaign. Our aim is to inspire 2020+ chefs from across the world to champion biodiversity by 2020 - the target year for achieving UN SDG 2.5. Chef actions will be showcased on the Food Forever and Chefs’ Manifesto websites. The impact will be aggregated to demonstrate how chefs can inspire better ways of cooking and eating and advocate for biodiversity conservation in their kitchens, restaurants and recipes.

Actions you can take:

Add a diverse ingredient to your menu - Chefs can help determine food trends. By promoting diversity within and between crops, chefs can positively impact the health of the planet and their consumers. (i.e. Think highlighting different types of tomatoes in a dish or adding a superstar crop like fonio to the menu)

Highlight a diverse ingredient of the month - Chefs can highlight the importance of a new crop each month as a key part of a sustainable food system (i.e. social media spotlight or a small display in your restaurant or on your menu about a crop like bambara groundnut - a West African favorite that’s drought resistant, hardy in a variety of soils, and nutritious)

Advocate - Chefs can educate and inspire their consumers by speaking up on social media, promoting diversity in public speaking opportunities and hosting diverse dinners. You can use your voice and your outlets to help ensure the importance of conserving crop diversity reaches as many people possible, so that come 2020, the prospect of ending hunger isn’t just a goal – but a reality.