



Official launch of the International Year of Quinoa

UN General Assembly, New York

20 February 2013

On 20 February 2013 the 67th UN General Assembly (UNGA) launched the International Year of Quinoa during its plenary at UN Headquarters in New York, fulfilling the General Assembly resolution A/RES/66/221 which declared 2013 as the International Year of Quinoa. This resolution calls for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to facilitate the observance of the International Year of Quinoa (IYQ), in collaboration with governments, relevant UN System agencies, indigenous peoples' organizations and NGOs.¹

Participating in the UNGA Plenary to launch the IYQ were the UN Secretary General, H.E. Ban Ki moon and the Permanent Representative of Peru, Enrique Morán-Morey, Vice President of the UNGA, the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Evo Morales, and FAO Director General, José Graziano da Silva.

The UN Secretary-General highlighted the potential role of quinoa in the achievement of the Zero Hunger Challenge which he launched at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. He underlined the potential of quinoa as a food that can help us achieve the Millennium Development Goals and be an important component of post-2015 development strategies.

The launch was marked by a day of activities saluting the many facets of quinoa. These included the Special Ceremony immediately following the Plenary, where FAO Director-General appointed the President of Bolivia and the First Lady of Peru as FAO Special Ambassadors for the IYQ, and called for a High Level Panel Discussion on the implications quinoa can have on food security and nutrition. Also participating in the day of events were FAO Goodwill Ambassadors Dee Dee Bridgwater and Carl Lewis who helped raised the visibility of the issues.

In an unprecedented display of support for the IYQ, a number of UN Member State representatives spoke during the plenary: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba (on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), Ecuador, Fiji (on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries and China), India, Italy, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Peru, South Africa and Venezuela all took the floor to laud the many attributes of quinoa.

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The IYQ was proposed by the Government of Bolivia, with the support of Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Guyana, Honduras, Iran, Liberia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Seychelles, Uruguay and Venezuela. A resolution recommending the establishment of 2013 as the IYQ was adopted by the FAO Conference in June 2011. Later a UNGA resolution declaring 2013 the IYQ was approved by the 66th General Assembly in December 2011.

They referred to the critical role quinoa could play in food security and nutrition and acknowledged its biodiversity, potential regarding climate change, and the contribution it could have on poverty eradication and for achieving development goals. Furthermore, due recognition was paid to the ancient grain's role in sustainable development and the management of natural resources, particularly land, water, forests, and fisheries.

The IYQ is intended to spread knowledge and understanding about quinoa, a hardy crop with high nutritional value, and to highlight the potential and importance of quinoa on food security, poverty alleviation, the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, and to the Andean farmers that have preserved the grain.

The IYQ provides a platform to focus world attention on food security and nutrition, on the need to promote environmentally-sound agricultural practices and to preserve biodiversity. Both the natural resource base and biodiversity are key to food security and poverty eradication and therefore, to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

As the lead UN agency for the implementation of the IYQ, FAO has been entrusted by the UNGA to undertake activities that will address these themes. In taking this decision, the UNGA not only reinforces FAO's mandate but also recognizes its expertise and capacity to mobilize Member States, UN agencies, civil society, and other development partners around this initiative. By so doing, the UN General Assembly has once more acknowledged the Organization's expertise on technical areas other than just agriculture, including land and water, forestry, fisheries, livestock, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

The successful launching of the IYQ was the result of close collaboration among FAO Headquarters and its decentralized offices, namely the FAO Liaison Office in New York and the FAO Regional Office in Santiago, Chile.

Finally, the launching of the IYQ provides a fitting backdrop to the 2014 International Year of Family Farming, which will highlight how family farming is at heart of livelihoods for millions of farmers across the world.