

# Maliwan

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FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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### Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN

Regional Office for Asia  
and the Pacific (RAP)  
Maliwan Mansion  
Phra Atit Road  
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel: (662) 6974000  
Fax: (662) 6974445  
E-mail: [FAO-RAP@fao.org](mailto:FAO-RAP@fao.org)  
Web sites: [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)  
[www.fao.or.th](http://www.fao.or.th)

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### Message from the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific

The middle of the year witnessed two major FAO events at the regional and global level that will help place food security and agricultural development priorities higher on the agenda of governments in the region and improve public awareness of FAO's campaign against hunger.

This issue of Maliwan informs us about the region's participation at the **World Food Summit: five years later (WFS: fyl)** from 10 to 13 June. With two-thirds of the undernourished people in the world and the bulk of the global agricultural population, Asia and the Pacific has a major responsibility in realising the goal and vision set forth by the summit. Countries in the region had the opportunity to review their role and priorities for ensuring food security at the **26<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC)** held in Kathmandu, Nepal from 13 to 17 May.

The unanimous adoption of the WFS: fyl declaration by the world's nations has once again endorsed FAO's belief that the goal of halving hunger by 2015, which was first set by the 1996 World Food Summit, is not unrealistic if appropriate political will and material resources are available. Over the past decade, some Asian countries have already demonstrated that it is, indeed, possible to make big gains against hunger within a short time with the right kind of policy, institutional and technological support.

A significant achievement of WFS: fyl is the agreement to evolve a set of voluntary guidelines to assist countries in promoting the right to food for their people. Several international and global instruments have recognised the right to food as a fundamental right. Indeed, it is the most basic human right since it is an essential condition for the enjoyment of all other rights. The urgency of this entitlement is most evident in Asia where more than 10 million people die every year as a result of hunger and diseases caused by undernourishment. Three out of every four of these deaths are children. The hungry child of today cannot wait for tomorrow.

Tragically, we are seeing hunger amidst abundance with enough food currently available for every person in the world. It is necessary to divert some of the surplus food to areas with emergency needs. However, a durable solution to hunger would require more balanced and sustainable gains in agricultural productivity and rural incomes within and among countries of the region.

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