

# This Day in History... October 16, 1945

## World Food Day

On October 16, 1945, the United Nations created the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Today, this date is celebrated as World Food Day.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, people began suggesting an international organization devoted to food and agriculture. In 1905, the International Institute of Agriculture was founded in Italy. It was the first international organization to address agriculture issues on a worldwide scale. The IIA collected information on agriculture and published the first agricultural census in 1930.



1971 stamp honoring the World Food Programme

In 1961, the FAO helped create the World Food Programme. This agency is the United Nations' front line in the fight against global hunger. It's the world's largest humanitarian agency and provides food aid to an average of 90 million people – including 56 million children – in more than 80 countries. The WFP works to save lives during refugee crises, improves nutrition, and helps people build assets.

In 1974, the FAO held the first World Food Summit and issued a proclamation that “every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop their physical and mental faculties.” They also made a commitment to resolve these issues within a decade. At a summit in 1996, they acknowledged that they hadn't achieved this goal, but set out to do so in the 21st century.



2005 Vienna stamps issued for World Food Day



1954 stamps honoring the FAO

The IIA disbanded during World War II. Then in 1943, President Franklin Roosevelt called for a Conference on Food and Agriculture. Held in Hot Springs, Virginia, it was attended by representatives from 44 governments. The conference's representatives agreed to form a permanent organization for food and agriculture. On October 16, 1945, the Food and Agriculture Organization held its first meeting in Quebec, Canada and adopted a constitution. All facilities and work from the IIA were also transferred to the FAO, whose headquarters were in Rome, Italy.

Established to eliminate hunger and improve nutrition, the FAO carries out a variety of tasks. These include development of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; technical assistance and research projects (such as monitoring livestock and human habitation by satellite), keeping up-to-date statistics regarding the production, consumption, and trade of agricultural products; educational projects; and the publication of periodicals, yearbooks, and research bulletins.



1971 Geneva stamp honoring the World Food Programme

In more recent efforts, the FAO reacted quickly to help farmers in Haiti after the island nation suffered a devastating earthquake in January 2010 that resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. The FAO has focused on working with farmers to clear irrigation ditches and establish better farming techniques to improve food production in the impoverished country.

The FAO has had a critical role in the Millennium Development Goals program. One of the primary goals of that program was to cut the number of hungry people in the world in half by 2015. The organization has worked on projects in over 100 countries, under the Special Programme for Food Security.

World Food Day was established on this date in 1979 and has been held every year since. Since 1981, each year has had a different theme to raise awareness of the different areas that need attention. Past themes have included food security, women in agriculture, trees for life, water for life, biodiversity for food security, family farming, and food prices – from crisis to stability. The 2021 theme is “Safe food now for a healthy tomorrow.”

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