

# Innovation, people key to creating a sustainable bioeconomy

Bioeconomy can aid in efforts to tackle global problems such as hunger, poverty, and climate change - if done right. According to FAO Deputy Director-General Climate and Natural Resources, Maria Helena Semedo, a sustainable bioeconomy "is foremost about nature and the people who take care of and produce biomass." This means family farmers, forest people and fishers, who are also "holders of important knowledge on how to manage natural resources in a sustainable way."



Image Source: [OutdoorRevival](#)

"We must foster internationally-coordinated efforts and ensure multi-stakeholder engagement at local, national and global levels," she said noting that this requires measurable targets, means to fulfil them and cost-effective ways to measure progress. "Together, let's harness the development for sustainable bioeconomy for all and leave no one behind," Semedo said.

## Innovation plays a key role

Bioeconomy refers to an economy that uses biomass as opposed to fossil resources to produce food and non-food goods such as bioplastics and biopharmaceuticals.

With innovation playing a key role in the bio-sector, we should ensure that all the knowledge - traditional and new - should be equally shared and supported, Semedo explained.

## Food security and climate change

Estimates show that some 815 million people in the world are still chronically undernourished, but with enough food being produced to feed the planet, the problem is often a lack of access. "Bioeconomy can improve access to food, such as through additional income from the sale of bio-products," Semedo said.

She also noted the potential contribution of bioeconomy to global efforts to address climate change, however warned against oversimplifying this. **"Just because a product is bio does not mean it is good for climate change, it depends on how it is produced, and in particular on how much and what type of energy is used in the process,"** Semedo said.

## FAO and the bioeconomy

She noted that FAO has a longstanding and wide experience in supporting family farmers and other small-scale biomass producers and businesses.



### Strengthening the role of family and small-scale farmers in scaling up agroecology

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Semedo, who met the new German Minister for Food and Agriculture, Julia Kloeckner on the sidelines of the Summit, described how with the support of Germany, FAO together with a multistakeholder international sustainable bioeconomy working group is currently developing sustainable bioeconomy guidelines.

To feed into this process, some 25 cases from around the world that serve as successful bioeconomy examples to develop good practices have already been identified.

Examples include how a group of women fishers in Zanzibar are producing cosmetics from algae, opening up a whole new market with sought-after niche products. Or in Malaysia, where a government programme supports a community-based bioeconomy, and in Colombia, where a community has participated in a project transforming, pineapple skins into biodegradable packaging and honey into royal jelly.

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