# Director-General UN FAO visit to Australia

13 November 2024

## Transcript

[Video begins]

**Adam Fenessy (Adam Fennessy, Secretary of the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)**: Can you reflect on things that you have seen that are of interest to you, as Director-General of the FAO, here in Australia?

**Dr Qu (Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation)**: Of course, I'm a close friend to Australia, especially our agriculture, food system, forestry, fishery in general. And this time I am so excited as my new role of FAO Director, to see the marvellous progress of the past 25 years, because I was here in 1999. So, I'm really happy, appreciative and grateful for your cooperation to support me, support FAO to implement our mandate.

**Professor Owen Atkin (Agrifood Innovation Institute, Australian National University)**: It was a real pleasure to have the Director-General of the FAO come and visit us today and in his words to us there was a lot of reflections on the need for a systems type approach to the whole issue of how we ensure that people have sufficient nutritious food available to them, but also considering that land and soil is used not just for food production, but it's a whole range of other purposes that are needed of society, around fibre, would be another example of that.

So, we need a more holistic perspective in the way in which land is used to produce things that are valuable to communities. And then you need to think about the ways in which you get those food products or fibre products, then to the people who need them.

**Caroline Wardrop (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry):** So, when designing this trip one of the things that I wanted to do was to be able to showcase both our youth and our women in agriculture, from the researchers here at ANU, right through to the farmers on the ground. Fiona Conroy, Lauren Finger, Caitlin McConnell. Some incredible women that we've seen during our time in Australia.

So, from this experience, how will you take this back to FAO? And also in 2026, it's the International Year of the Woman Farmer. So how can our Australian experience help inform your thinking when you're preparing for 2026?

**Beth Bechol (Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation):** Yeah, well, there's first of all, let me just congratulate you, and thank you, Caroline, for I mean, a really outstanding program for the Director-General and for me. This was my first trip as you know to Australia. And to continue on to the islands is going to be an incredibly special opportunity for both of us.

But I think for me one of the very significant takeaways was just what you framed in your question to me about the importance and the just really outstanding contributions and the creativity and the innovation and the commitment and passion that's coming from female farmers, women farmers but also young farmers and then maybe especially young women farmers is a subset of that.

FAO does a lot of even before we get to advocacy and promotion, we do a lot of research analytical work on the status of women and soon young people in agrifood systems.

Just last year, we released a very important report on women's roles across the world in agrifood systems. And, you know, I think it probably comes as no surprise. They make up the majority of the agri food system output, and in the production, they're not paid enough, they work too many hours, and the inequality, the lack of access to whether it's land or finance and credit or innovation.

These are all things that are really important for us to elevate and to be able to showcase Australian women farmers who are rising above those challenges is really super important to us.

[Video ends]

[End of transcript]

**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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