



FAO HONORS SLOW FOOD PRESIDENT CARLO PETRINI

by Lucy Gordan | Food | 0 comments



On May 26th the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), headquartered in Rome, Italy, named Carlo (better known as "Carlin") Petrini, one of the founders of Slow Food and today its President, FAO Special Ambassador Zero Hunger for Europe.

With over 100,000 members worldwide in 1,500 local chapters, Slow Food, a non-profit grassroots organization, works in over 160 countries to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions and to ensure that everyone has access to good, clean and fair food. Slow Food—Petrini's term—is used to signal awareness of the food's origin, on the part of the producer and "co-producer", the movement's name for the consumer. Slow Food shies away from the word "consumer" because, says Petrini, "by being informed about how our food is produced and actively supporting those who produce it, we become a part of and a partner in the production process.



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FAO Director-General since 2011 and the first Latin American to hold this position, Brazilian agronomist José Graziano da Silva praised Petrini's contribution to increasing public awareness of the need to improve agriculture in Europe and to ensure a sustainable food supply chain. "These include numerous activities drawing attention to the necessity to reintroduce local crops that small holders and subsistence farmers can produce for their own consumption and sell on the markets as a means to achieve food security," he said.

Petrini's nomination and his involvement in FAO's advocacy activities will "send a strong signal to the international community that we can create a world where no one is hungry," continued Graziano da Silva. "Petrini's expertise and dedication will strongly contribute towards building the "Zero Hunger Generation" and ending hunger altogether by 2030."

Accepting the appointment Petrini said: "The shame of hunger...can and must be defeated within this generation;

commitment in this regard must take a political priority in all international forums, along with national and civil society.” Although never before in collaboration, Petrini and Graziano da Silva, both born in 1949, have dedicated their lives, heart and soul, to rural development and alleviating hunger through food security.



Scrawny Piemontese Petrini, who describes himself as a professional gourmet, began his professional life in 1977 as an enogastronomic journalist for left-wing newspapers, a profession he still practices today, having added several food and wine guides and books to his bibliography in the meantime. A prolific writer with many titles available in English on Amazon, Petrini’s three most recent are: *Food and Freedom: How the Slow Food Movement is Changing the World Through Gastronomy* (2015); *Porta Palazzo: An Anthropology of an Italian Market (Contemporary Ethnography)* (2014); and *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, and Fair* (2013).

Petrini first came to prominence in the mid-1980s for taking part in campaigns against the fast food chain McDonald’s opening near the Spanish Steps in Rome and against cheap wine adulterated with methanol, which in 1986 killed 19 people, hospitalized many more, and caused exports of Italian wine to plummet by more than one-third, from 17 to 11 hectoliters. In 1983 he’d helped to create and develop the Italian non-profit food and wine association known as “Arcigola”, but now it was an emergency, the time to salvage the good name of Italian food and wine. It was not a matter of nostalgia, but of survival. So in 1989 he founded the International Slow Food Movement, to build awareness that Italy’s wealth of regional traditional food was at risk from fast food. Fifteen years later, in 2004 in his hometown of Bra, he founded the University of Gastronomic Sciences, a school intended to bridge the gap between agriculture and gastronomy. His other brainchildren include: from 1996 Salone del Gusto, a huge showcase for foods of excellence from all over the world, held every other October in Turin; as is Terre Madre (“Mother Earth”), an event which brings 5,000 small-scale farmers and fishermen from 130 countries to Turin, launched in 2004, not to mention Cheese, held every two years in Bra, as is Slow Fish, but in Genoa.



Graziano da Silva’s interest in food, in particular feeding the poor, came through academia and public service, first as a professor of agricultural economics in Brazil and then as a government minister. Before entering FAO in 2006, between 2003 and 2004, for example, Graziano served in the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva cabinet as Extraordinary Minister for Food Security. He was responsible for implementing the Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) program, which successfully cancelled 28 million Brazilians from the national poverty lists and reduced undernourishment by 25% in Brazil during the 8 years of the Lula administration.

In his role as a Special Ambassador Zero Hunger, Petrini will help ensure a better understanding of FAO's vision of a world free of hunger and malnutrition in which food and agriculture contribute towards improving livelihoods, particularly those of poor people. His activities will include participation at high-level events and public fora as well as contributing to key publications, field project visits and fund raising.

Thanks to a 2013 agreement FAO and Slow Food have been working together to promote inclusive food and agriculture systems and have participated in joint advocacy campaigns and global initiatives including the 2014 International Year of Family Farming and the 2016 International Year of Pulses.



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