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Chef Elijah Amoo Addo and cook Angel Laryea of Food For All Africa prepare free lunch to redu

Chef Elijah Amoo Addo and cook Angel Laryea of Food For All Africa prepare free lunch to reduce food waste and feed those in need in Accra, Ghana, June 3, 2022. (CNS photo/Francis Kokoroko, Reuters)

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Vatican City — September 29, 2022
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The international community can no longer ignore the cries of the poor and the hungry who fall victim to food loss and waste, Pope Francis said.

In a Sept. 29 message to Qu Dongyu, director-general of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, or FAO, the pope lamented the "paradox of abundance" -- that there is enough food to feed the world population, but millions continue to starve due to its improper management and distribution.

And "food cannot be the object of speculation," he wrote, referring to the betting on future food prices by financial markets. "Life depends on it. And it is a scandal that large producers encourage compulsive consumerism to enrich themselves, without even considering the real needs of human beings."

"Food speculation must be stopped! We must stop treating food, which is a fundamental good for all, as a bargaining chip for a few," he said.

The pope's message to Qu coincided with the U.N. International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste.

FAO said the international day highlights a "clear call to action for public and private entities from across the food system to act now to reduce (food loss and waste) and raise awareness among consumers of the urgent need for actions they can take to cut food waste."

In his message, the pope said access to food is "a basic and fundamental right of every person," and the loss and waste of food "is truly shameful and worrying."

"Both food loss and food waste are truly deplorable events because they divide humanity between those who have too much and those who lack the essentials; because they increase inequalities, generate injustice and deny the poor what they need to live in dignity," he wrote.

Francis called on the international community to not "be satisfied with rhetorical exercises, which end up in declarations that later fail to be carried out due to forgetfulness, pettiness or greed."

Instead, he said, it is time for nations and international organizations "to act urgently for the common good."

"It is urgent for both states and large multinational corporations, for associations and individuals -- for all, excluding no one -- to respond effectively and honestly to the heart-rending cry of the hungry who are demanding justice," the pope said.

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