7th Slow Food International Congress
Chengdu, China
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Motion 6
Plastic in the planet's ecosystem: A threat to our food and health

Given that:

- Humanity's total production of plastic amounts to 8.3 billion tons, of which 6.3 billion tons have already ended up as waste. Only 9% of plastic is recycled after its use, while 12% is incinerated and the remaining 79% piles up in landfill or is dumped in the environment, causing serious damage to ecosystems. In 2010 alone, 8 million tons of plastic entered the oceans.
- Global production of plastics has increased from 2 million tons in 1950 to over 400 million tons in 2015, with an acceleration unequalled among other materials apart from steel and cement. But these are used in the building industry while for plastics the biggest market is packaging, meaning the majority of the plastic produced is thrown away after a single use. At this rate, by 2050 there will be, by weight, more plastic in the seas than fish.
- Over time, large plastic waste (macroplastics) degrades and breaks down thanks to photodegradation and mechanical action, becoming micro- and nanoplastics. This means that by now plastic fibers can be found in all environmental media, for example in much of the world's drinking water, in the air we breathe and in the food we eat.
- There are many aspects to the unsustainability of plastic waste, and the costs of inactivity and lack of management are very high:
    - In the environment sector, plastic creates intense pressure on ecosystems.
    - In the private economic sector, it represents a potential economic loss for tourism and recreational activities.
    - In the social and public administration sector, plastic has an enormous economic weight, due to the costs of infrastructure and services for waste management and the costs of water treatment. Micro- and nanoplastics are a risk to human health due to the release of chemical substances along the food web of which we are part. Without knowing it, we are eating plastic and we still don't fully know its effects on human health. We do know from research on marine organisms that plastic has carcinogenic effects and influences endocrine and neurological mechanisms.

We,
the representatives of the Slow Food and Terra Madre network, having come from 90 countries around the world to unite at the International Congress in Chengdu, China,

declare

our commitment to giving value to plastic and to stop considering it as a disposable product, reintroducing new recovered material into the market and the economic cycle.

In particular, we commit to:

- focusing on the concept of “Zero Waste,” and on the economic value that plastic has in order to launch a virtuous economy that eliminates the word waste, replacing it with resource.
- promoting the circular economy, encouraging and practicing the sorting of waste and the reuse of plastic materials.
- promoting in our countries the reduce of packaging and the replacement, where possible, of plastic with natural, biodegradable or compostable equivalents, made from materials which are produced sustainably and without the use of GMOs.
- regarding the substitution of plastics with natural, cultivated materials, avoid conflict between traditional cultivation for food production and the industrial production of bioplastics;
- promote and support wide-reaching environmental education campaigns in countries where there is still a lack of awareness of the environmental problems regarding plastics and/or where a circular economy is not considered a source of wealth in economic, environmental, social and human terms;
- supporting and demanding national policies that aim to eliminate microplastics from cosmetics and replace them with natural products.
- supporting and demanding national policies that provide for research looking both at data collection and the recovery of material for reuse, with a consequent reduction of the presence of plastic waste in the sea and on land.