

**Q&A WITH EDWARD MUKIIBI, PRESIDENT OF SLOW FOOD**  
**FOOD FOR CHANGE 2024: PLANT THE FUTURE**

**In the last years Slow Food has been working on agroecology and on the promotion of a plant rich diet. Why has this topic been chosen as a campaign?**

The timing is crucial. The last two themes at our biennial Terra Madre Salone del Gusto international event indicated a need to broaden our horizons: to set aside our flags and borders to address our shared challenges and recognize that sustainability is no longer sufficient: regeneration is what's needed. For this year's Terra Madre, we are going a step further with a claim which puts us all at the center of the world with We are Nature and where agroecology will be the main keyword. There the Plant the future campaign takes a central role as our way of choosing what we eat is fundamental to reverse the current trends which are destroying our environment and our future.. We must face the seriousness of climate change and find a healthier relationship with nature, through food. People eating plant-rich diets are no longer the outliers, but meat consumption is still projected to rise, and we need to make a huge push to embed a healthy, plant-rich approach in our collective mindsets. So, I would talk about this movement having reached critical mass, and that's where chefs, such as those of Relais & Châteaux and of the Slow Food Cooks Alliance can step in, showing how plant-rich dishes can feature in the best kitchens, the best menus in the world, with Relais & Châteaux Association's chefs acting as the most inspiring culinary influencers.

**Can this campaign really make a difference outside the world of fine dining?**

We have to make tough decisions now in order to avert the climate and public health emergencies we face and improve animal welfare. By adjusting the balance toward plant-rich dishes, food choices can powerfully influence global trends that contribute to a regenerative food system. While they operate in the world of fine dining, Relais & Châteaux chefs can inspire a 'trickle down' effect in all types of cooks—in other restaurants and at home too. This cultural shift will not happen overnight, but by demonstrating how this can change one menu, dish or ingredient at a time, it's less of a shock to the system, a more natural transition, and easier to adopt for everyone.

### **Can you explain what you mean by adopting an ‘agroecological’ approach?**

For Slow Food, agroecology is a science, a set of practices and a social movement at the same time, and its primary objective is to harmonize the interactions between plants, animals, human beings and the environment, while ensuring that the food system is an equitable one where everyone can exert control over their food choices.. Talking about chefs’ role, this is about ensuring them to re-evaluate their suppliers and sources for all their ingredients, to ensure that the food they buy, and the social system that cultivated or reared them. More than just a set of agricultural practices, it can play an important role in changing social relationships, empowering farmers and privileging short productive chains geared to a holistic improvement of the world around us.

### **From a diner’s perspective, can plant-rich diets be as rewarding from a taste perspective?**

Absolutely! Most menus don’t truly embrace the biodiversity of local vegetables, fruit, legumes, nuts, seeds, mushrooms and algae available to them, and there are so many culinary techniques and cultures to learn from. The creativity of Relais & Châteaux chefs is critical here—from a culinary innovation point of view, and the theater of the serve.

### **What’s the significance of the Terra Madre event?**

Our biennial event – now in its 15th edition – brings together thousands of stakeholders from the global food system, from food producers and artisans to distributors, environmentalists and politicians. It’s a fantastic forum to swap ideas and shape minds about the future of our post-industrial food system. This year, in Turin, the theme of agroecology will help shift the focus away from the ultimately simplistic idea of ‘sustainability’ to embrace the sheer complexity of all its interwoven facets and adopt a more holistic approach toward agroecology. Relais & Châteaux will be presenting its work, achievements and ambitions to the conference, provoking discussion and debate about how plant-rich diets can become truly embedded in our collective food culture.