NEW SITES IN ITALY AND JAPAN RECOGNIZED IN 2025 AS GIAHS GLOBALLY IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS

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In 2025, during a meeting of the GIAHS Scientific Advisory Group on August 26, three new sites, one in Italy and two in Japan, have been designated as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) flagship programme.

With this latest addition to the global agricultural heritage systems list showcasing agrobiodiversity, traditional knowledge and cultural heritage, FAO's worldwide agricultural heritage network now comprises of 102 systems in 29 countries, with Japan reaching 17 sites and Italy adding its third.

The website presents the three new GIAHS included in the list:

Lemon Orchards and the Terraced Agricultural System in Amalfi

Perched on steep terraces of Italy's Amalfi Coast, centuries-old farming communities have shaped a striking landscape of lemon groves, olive trees, and vineyards overlooking the sea. The iconic "Sfusato Amalfitano" lemon is grown under chestnut pergolas using manual techniques and harvested by so-called "flying farmers" — a term coined by the way they balance and walk along the pergolas during harvest.

Terraces built with dry-stone walls prevent erosion, stabilize the land, and help regulate water and temperature. This territory holds up to 800 lemon trees per hectare, yielding up to 35 tons using low-input, pesticide-free methods. It is also rich in biodiversity, with over 970 plant species, including rare Mediterranean flora.

Women play a key role, contributing to farm labour and traditions in this system. The terraced system is also a recognized UNESCO World Heritage site, serving as powerful example of sustainable Mediterranean mountain agriculture. PhotosGiahs

The Stone Terraced Mikan Orchard System of Arida-Shimotsu Region, Wakayama Prefecture, Japan

In the mountainous Arida-Shimotsu region of Wakayama Prefecture, Japan, generations of farming families have cultivated mikan (*Citrus unshiu*) for over 400 years. This traditional system is built on stone terraced orchards, adapted to steep slopes and the region's humid subtropical climate. The terraces maintain vital soil and water functions and support more than 30 mikan varieties adapted to local microclimates.

Rooted in small-scale family farming using time-tested methods, the system preserves traditional knowledge, biodiversity, and resilience to climate change. Traditional techniques and dry-stone walls help to regulate drainage, retain heat and prevent cold damage, while beekeeping, forestry, and intercropping with vegetables contribute to food security and economic resilience.

Festivals, culinary traditions, and stories associated with mikan varieties reflect the cultural practices and collective values in Arida. Photos GIAHS

Sustainable Water Management and Agricultural, Forestry, and Livestock System Readapted from Tatara Ironmaking in the Okuizumo Area, Japan

In Japan's Okuizumo region, degraded soils from former iron sand mining were transformed into terraced rice fields nourished by centuries-old, community-managed irrigation canals. There, farmers developed a unique circular system combining rice cultivation, forestry, cattle grazing, and buckwheat farming that reuses local resources.

Central to this system is the role of Japanese Black Cattle, which provide both income through high-quality beef and supply manure to enrich paddy soils. Buckwheat, adapted to upland slopes, serves as a key cultural crop alongside rice and vegetables. Despite challenges such as depopulation, the system remains resilient due to strong cultural ties, landscape stewardship, and locally rooted innovation. Photos GIAHS

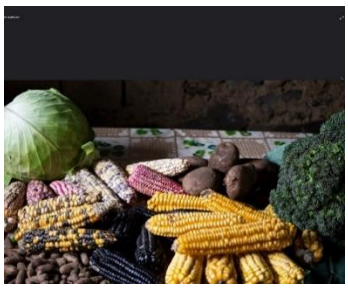
With these three new additions, the Global Agricultural Heritage network now includes 102 systems across 29 countries, bringing the number of such sites to more than 100 worldwide in the year that FAO celebrates its 80th anniversary. These dynamic and resilient systems embody rich agrobiodiversity, traditional knowledge, invaluable cultures, and landscapes, sustainably managed by farmers, herders, fisherfolk, and forest communities in ways that support local livelihoods and food security.

The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) are agroecosystems inhabited by communities that maintain an intricate relationship with their territory. These evolving sites are resilient systems characterized by remarkable agrobiodiversity, traditional knowledge, invaluable cultures and landscapes; they are sustainably managed by farmers, herders, fisherfolk, and forest people in ways that contribute to their livelihoods and food security. Under FAO's GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems) initiative, the selected sites demonstrate global importance through their contributions to food and livelihood security, agro-biodiversity, sustainable knowledge systems and practices, social values and culture as well as outstanding landscapes. Many of these sites showcase exemplary practices that enhance the resilience of agrifood systems to climate change, promote biodiversity use and ensure the sustainable management of ecosystems.

Traditional agriculture systems continue to provide food for nearly two billion people worldwide. They also sustain biodiversity, livelihoods, practical knowledge and cultural heritage. -This global agricultural heritage needs to be recognized and supported in ways that enable it to evolve while continuing to provide essential goods and services for the present and future generations.

"As it extends to new regions and countries, the GIAHS network is once again demonstrating its distinctive role in showcasing agricultural systems that promote traditions nurtured by communities and ways of pursuing their livelihoods in

harmony with nature," said Kaveh Zahedi, Director of the Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and environment at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). "As we confront the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity, the contribution age old ways to build resilience and use biodiversity sustainably is all the more vital in transforming our agrifood systems to keep up with the challenges.". With rising interest from across the globe the GIAHS designations are set to exceed 100 by the time a Certificate Award Ceremony will take place on 31 October in the context of FAO's 80th anniversary celebrations.



The GIAHS website allows users to check the list by region and country of the global agricultural heritage sites. In this section it is possible to visit each designated system's dedicated webpage to discover further information, photos, videos, news and stories.

To know more

News in the GIAHS website

The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Initiative

Twenty years of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems - 2022 FAO publication

Preparation and submission a GIAHS proposal