Background

The FAO’s Regional Initiative (RI) on “Africa’s Commitment to End Hunger by 2025” assists countries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in strengthening their systems and capacities to deliver programmes that contribute to eradicating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

Established in 2014, the initiative mobilizes political commitment in support of a sharper programmatic, policy and investment focus on food security and nutrition, by facilitating stronger partnership, inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination, and by strengthening governance and accountability mechanisms needed to mutually achieve tangible impacts.

At continental and global levels, the RI is aligned with the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, and with the Sustainable Development Goal two (SDG2): “End Hunger, Achieve Food Security, Improve Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture”.

Highlights of key achievements 2016-2017

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems

The RI supported the:

- African Union Commission (AUC) to finalize its three-year medium-term implementation plan for the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (ARNS);
- AUC to develop its Sustainable School Food and Nutrition Strategy (2015-2025) and related implementation plan, the Africa Renewed Initiative for Stunting Elimination (ARISE), and the AU Chairperson Initiative for nutrition in drought and conflict affected countries;
- development and start-up implementation of the road maps on the regional food security and nutrition strategy of the Indian Ocean Countries and Small Island countries in Africa;
- assessment of the implementation progress of ECOWAS multi-sectoral nutrition initiatives as well as formulation and validation of the new regional nutrition strategic plan for West Africa;
- African Development Bank (AfDB) to initiate the development of a multi-departmental nutrition strategy, and to design and implement a nutrition sensitive agriculture investment strategy;
establishment of the African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN) with the Secretariat hosted at the AfDB;

follow-up to the implementation of the ICN 2 recommendations;

formulation and validation of food and nutrition security policies for Congo, Gabon and Central African Republic;

comprehensive flagship program design in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe using agriculture and food system pathways for achieving nutrition outcomes.

To foster a better understanding of the regional specificities of food systems for optimal nutrition, and mutual accountability toward regional and global nutrition commitments in Africa, the RI organized a regional symposium on the theme “sustainable food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition” in November 2017.

This dialogue identified practical entry points for concerted policy and programmatic actions. The RI also initiated the development of Food Based Dietary Guidelines in the Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The guidelines will facilitate harmonized national nutrition messages and can inform agricultural, food security, nutrition and health policies. In addition, the initiative supported advocacy with the AU Special Technical Committee of Health Ministers to adopt sustainable school food and nutrition strategy to make impact on lifelong optimal nutrition of children and for the socio-economic development in Africa. In the same line, the RI facilitated the commemoration of the Africa Day of Food and Nutrition Security held in Abidjan in 2017 and Accra in 2016.

Domestication of Malabo declaration and formulation of new generation of agriculture investment plans

Subsequent to the assessment of hunger eradication policies and efforts to identify priority areas to address policy, programmatic and investment gaps, the RI supported the:

formulation and validation of integrated agricultural policies, strategies and Malabo-compliant investment plans in 13 countries out of which seven await the finalization and official validation by the respective governments;

supported or collaborated with ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA and IGAD in the formulation of their Regional Agricultural Investment Plans (RAIPs) at regional level;

contributed to the formulation of the new Medium-Term Food and Nutrition Security Strategy of Ghana, the fourth Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA-4) and the Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (ASIP) in Rwanda, the Agriculture Sector Growth and Transformation Strategy (ASGTS) in Kenya, and the strategy for livestock sector development in Chad;

supported the formulation and validation of the 5-year sustainable agriculture, food and nutrition security programme in Guinea, mainstreaming nutrition into the national food security and nutrition policies in Angola, and the development of a nutrition sensitive food fortification programme in The Gambia;

supported the round table for resource mobilization toward the implementation of the NAIP in Chad.
Key achievements in 2016-2017

Linking social protection with agriculture and food security

The RI supported the AUC’s “SPIREWORK” initiative and assessed needs and the roles of cooperatives in promoting the delivery of social protection and social security to informal agricultural families in Malawi, Kenya, Cameroun and Côte d’Ivoire.

It also provided technical inputs on how social protection has mutual impacts on food security and nutrition, agricultural production and resilience in the context of agricultural policy and strategy revision in Senegal and Burkina. In Rwanda, local Parliamentarians are sensitized to the articulations between social protection and agriculture, food security and nutrition.

Raising awareness, Advocacy on FSN and exchanging best practices

The RI supported the establishment of the Pan African Parliamentary Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, and facilitated experience sharing between the Parliamentary Front against Hunger of the Latin American and Caribbean and Parliamentarians from Africa as well as engagement of the Pan African Parliament with the European and Japanese Parliament.

In Burkina Faso, Madagascar and Rwanda, advocacy amongst the National Parliamentarian Committees towards the incorporation of the right to food in legal documents, and consideration to the use of social protection in agriculture and rural areas was raised. Furthermore, the RI contributed to the:

- high-level policy dialogues to initiate Malabo domestication in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, and Rwanda;

Monitoring, evaluation and supporting accountability mechanisms

To enhance compliance to CAADP/Malabo and SDG accountability and reporting mechanisms, the RI strengthened and supported the:

- capacities of member states in SADC and COMESA regions by training national trainers on the preparation of Biennial Review reports;
- preparation and submission of the Biennial Review reports of Rwanda, Ghana and Chad to their respective RECs;
- consolidation of sub-regional biennial reports of ECOWAS, ECCAS, SADC and EAC that were presented to the Heads of State in January 2018;
- domestication of SDG translation into national strategies and action plans, as well as the preparation of SDG Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in Benin, Botswana, Kenya Nigeria and Togo;
- report on nutrition indicators of the SADC region in the CAADP Result framework;
- integration of Minimum Dietary Diversity Score for women in Agriculture Census in Nigeria.

Capacity building and joint initiatives

In the context of improving monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and legislations relevant to the eradication of hunger, the RI:

- trained and raised awareness of officials of National Statistics Offices and Ministries of

KENYA
A member of Samburu pastoral community receiving some hay during FAO response to drought challenges in Samburu
Photo: ©FAO/Luis Tato

Key achievements in 2016-2017
Agriculture in 24 African countries on how the Prevalence of Und nourishment (PoU) and the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) fit into the SDGs monitoring process and their relevance for food security policy of the information they provide;

- advocated for the inclusion of the FIES and food consumption modules in national surveys;

- strengthened the capacity of regional institutions and international organizations (e.g. UNECA, WFP) in the application of the PoU and FIES methodologies for monitoring SDG 2.1 as part of an effort to jointly publish future editions of the Regional Panorama on food security and nutrition in Africa;

- raised the awareness of Civil Society Organizations and strengthened their capacities on the right to food, and trained over 300 technical officers, from the 15 members States, regional apex civil society and farmer-based organizations in West African budgeting, economic, and financial analysis of investment projects;

- coordinated and contributed technically to the publication of the 2016 and 2017 editions of the Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Africa, with supporting policies and programmes;

- enhanced the capacity of the newly established Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries in Ethiopia for an effective integration of livestock in the implementation of the “Integrated Industrial Park” initiative as well as the initiation of the implementation of the Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Strategy of Ethiopia;

- launched a programme (joint FAO and EU) on Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST), which provides policy assistance and capacity development support to relevant national government institutions and sub-regional organizations in fifteen African countries.

**Partnership and knowledge exchange**

*Within the framework of South-South Cooperation (SSC), the RI:*

- provided support for the conceptualization of an African Centre for Best Practices, Capacity Development and SSC;

- completed an initial assessment in collaboration with the African Capacity Building Foundation, and proposed a model for consideration and establishment;

- organized four SSC exchange programmes: (i) Niger to Tunisia to learn more about good practices in policy development and implementation; (ii) Ghana to Ethiopia focusing on web-based M & E system and coordination of agriculture sector programmes, Ethiopia to Ghana with focus on agricultural mechanization and post-harvest mechanized equipment and (iv) Ethiopia to Rwanda with focus on mutual accountability and capacity building in agriculture;

- contributed to strengthening FAO’s partnership with the AfDB, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) through the revision of Memoranda of Understanding, supported nutrition advocacy as a cornerstone for socio-economic development (in partnership with UNICEF, WECARD, WHO, WFP and ECCAS), which resulted in a declaration of Brazzaville endorsed by ECCAS and allowed member countries to update their road maps of food and nutrition security.

**Key Lessons Learned and Way Forward**

Leadership and engagement of the Regional Economic Communities and national governments are extremely important to achieve food and nutrition security in Africa.

There is a need to strengthen national and regional capacity for linking investment plans to policy and budget processes, and innovative financing mechanism to create opportunities for translating investment plans and programmes into concrete actions and tangible impacts on the livelihood of farmers. It is also essential to create the right environment to facilitate the mobilization of the private sector to invest in the agricultural sector.

Building on this experience, the RI will continue to support the accelerated implementation and reporting on Malabo declaration and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development both at all levels, based on the political momentum gained so far.

The Initiative will advance nutrition sensitive food systems to reduce all forms of hunger and malnutrition, including hidden hunger while promoting mutual accountability by all stakeholders in meeting the hunger commitments.

**More emphasis will be placed on the following areas:** strengthening capacities to develop and implement sectoral and cross-sectoral (nutrition-sensitive) policy frameworks, strategies and investment plans and programmes; improving financial resource mobilization and use, and institutional and organizational capacity development; strengthening the capacities of Parliamentarians for greater engagement in the legal frameworks for food security and nutrition, for an institutionalized reporting on the Minimum Dietary Diversity; documenting best practices in addressing malnutrition in all its forms.