FAO work to promote
Decent rural employment

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STRATEGIC PROGRAMME TO REDUCE RURAL POVERTY
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Cover photo: ©FAO/Daniel Hayduk
Creating more and better employment opportunities in rural areas is essential to reduce poverty, eradicate hunger and improve food security.

The majority of rural workers, especially youth, hold precarious and poorly remunerated jobs.

Employment is one of the main drivers of migration.

The world population will increase to 9 billion by 2050, along with a 60% expansion in demand for agricultural products.

Agriculture presents a largely untapped reservoir of employment opportunities.
Over three quarters of the world’s poor live in rural areas and many of them depend on agriculture to earn a living. The majority of rural workers hold precarious and poorly remunerated jobs in the informal rural economy. Youth in particular face additional disadvantages in accessing productive and gainful jobs, due to their limited access to productive resources, including land and credit, as well as markets and organizations. This situation can trap them in a vicious cycle of hunger and poverty, fuelling distress migration.

Revitalising rural economies and actively promoting productive employment and decent work in rural areas is crucial to improve food security and reduce inequalities and poverty.

Decent jobs are opportunities for work that are productive, respect core labour standards, provide a fair income (whether through self-employment or wage labour) and ensure equal treatment for all. Workers should be able to perform their tasks under safe and healthy conditions and have a voice in the workplace.

Being central to its mission, FAO actively promote decent rural employment (DRE) at global, regional and country level.

FAO’s comparative advantage lies in its widespread country presence, its historical support to rural institutions and the agrifood sector, and its strong expertise in small-scale, self-employed and informal agricultural occupations. Building on this, FAO plays a crucial role in promoting productive employment and decent work in rural areas, especially with respect to employment in agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, natural resources management, as well as in non-farm occupations in agri-food value chains.

In particular, FAO proactively supports countries in the development of policies and programmes to generate more decent farm and non-farm employment opportunities, promoting employment-enhancing and responsible investments in agriculture and food systems. The Organization particularly looks to boost green jobs in the transition to environmentally sustainable agriculture and food production.

FAO also works to improve working conditions and foster the application of labour standards in rural settings, as these are among the main factors that undermine the wellbeing and productive potential of rural populations. To ensure that no one is left behind, FAO targets disadvantaged groups of workers in its programmes and activities, particularly youth, women and migrant workers in rural areas.

Addressing the employment challenge requires increased capacities across several institutions and rural workers.

FAO Strategic Objective 3
Under FAO Strategic Objective 3 "Reduce rural poverty", the Organizational Outcome 2 commits FAO to ensure that "The rural poor have greater opportunities to access decent farm and non-farm employment."

Sustainable Development Goals
FAO’s work on decent rural employment (DRE) contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 8: "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all." Considering the links between employment, agricultural development, food security and poverty reduction, FAO’s work on DRE is also closely linked to SDG1 "End poverty in all its forms" and SDG2 "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture".
themselves. FAO supports countries through trainings and technical advice, actively encouraging dialogue between agriculture and labour stakeholders. It also fosters cross-sectoral policy coherence towards decent rural employment, in particular among agriculture, employment, social protection, and youth and gender-related policies.

Finally, the Organization supports knowledge generation on employment issues in rural settings, shedding light on the linkages among decent work, sustainable agricultural growth and rural transformations. The final aim is to build evidenced-based policy change.

In order to coordinate more coherent and integrated responses to rural un- and underemployment, FAO works in partnership with other UN agencies and with regional, national and community-level actors, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and networks like the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture, and the Global Migration Group.

Quick facts

- Agricultural and other rural livelihoods are responsible for over 38 per cent of employment in low- and middle-income countries, making the agrifood sector a major source of jobs (IFAD, 2016).
- Globally, nearly two-thirds of youth are found in a state of extreme, moderate or near poverty, reaching over 90 percent in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (ILO, 2015).
- Women are more likely than men to hold low-wage, part-time, and seasonal employment (FAO, 2015).
- Nearly 8 out of every 10 of the working poor live in rural areas (ILO, 2012).
- Almost 60 percent of all child labour is found in agriculture, affecting nearly 100 million children (ILO, 2010).

FAO's Integrated Country Approach

One of the FAO flagship programmes in the area of policy support is the Integrated Country Approach (ICA) for promoting decent rural employment. The ICA programme has been implemented so far in five countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, mainly funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

The ICA approach mobilizes several core functions in synergy, with the aim to induce sustainable policy change. The integrated nature of ICA also refers to its multilevel scope (global, regional and national). At country level, ICA focuses on enhancing the employment content of national strategies, policies and programmes for agricultural and rural development. This will optimize, in the medium to long term, the contribution of the sector to improve the quantity and the quality of rural jobs.

A first phase of the Programme was implemented in Malawi and Tanzania, in the period 2011-2014. The current phase (2015-2017) focuses on Senegal, Uganda and Guatemala and mainly targets the rural youth.
Promoting youth employment in rural areas

The world’s population is young. 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 live in the world today and almost 88 percent of them come from developing countries. Although this figure is expected to grow, employment opportunities for rural youth remain limited and of poor quality, particularly for those living in rural areas of developing countries.

At the same time, farming populations are ageing worldwide, where older farmers are often less likely to adopt the new technologies needed to sustainably increase agricultural productivity for growing populations. Hence, creating more productive and gainful jobs for the rural youth is particularly urgent.

Efforts should focus on the untapped potential for farm and non-farm employment in the agriculture sector and within food systems. The drivers for change should be identified on both the labour demand and supply side, including skills development and access to social protection, but also increased public and private investments in rural areas and business development.

These interventions have been part of FAO’s work for the last four decades. To promote employment opportunities for rural youth, FAO engages with governments, private sector and civil society partners at all levels, focusing its efforts and resources around the implementation of a complementary set of activities. Through awareness-raising, capacity development, policy assistance, and technical support activities, FAO seeks to develop a strong enabling environment in which young people can thrive, while simultaneously empowering youth to seize current and future opportunities.

In particular, FAO works to:

- Develop field-tested approaches and disseminate good practices to address the constraints rural youth face in accessing decent work. For example, the FAO private and public partnership model for youth employment in agriculture is designed to strengthen young people’s skills while facilitating their access to land, credit and markets; and enhances their ability to partake in policy debates.

- Support governments in the design and implementation of strategies that more effectively target rural youth. FAO also works with governments to integrate

FAO and the private sector

FAO partners with the private sector to guarantee better employment prospects for youth. Multi-stakeholder dialogue and public-private partnerships are facilitated to involve the private sector in the development of capacity building programmes, the enhancement of linkages between groups of young producers and agri-based entrepreneurs, as well as the improvement of service provision to support value chains' inclusiveness towards the youth.
JFFLS methodology

The Junior Farmer Field and Life School (JFFLS) is a tailor-made educational programme developed by FAO to provide young farmers with the skills and insights needed to engage in agriculture and adopt environmentally friendly production methods.

Scaling up decent jobs for youth

At global level:

IANYD

FAO is part of cooperation mechanisms such as the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD). The IANYD is a network of UN entities whose work is relevant to youth. Its aim is to increase the effectiveness of UN work in youth development by strengthening collaboration among relevant UN entities, while harnessing the benefits of their unique approaches and mandates.

Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth

This initiative, led by ILO, is the first UN system-wide effort to scale up action in support of youth employment, involving in its development 19 entities of the United Nations, among which: FAO, UNIDO, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDESA, UNEP, World Bank, and the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. The Initiative will scale up regional and country level actions on decent jobs for youth, through tailor-made funding modalities and resource mobilization.

At regional level:

FAO/IFAD Youth Caribe

The FAO/IFAD Programme Strengthening DRE opportunities for young women and men in the Caribbean was launched in 2015 to address the growing level of youth unemployment in the region.

The programme aims at creating national rural youth employment plans and a overarching regional youth employment strategy.
Nearly 71 percent of child labour - around 110 million boys and girls - takes place in agriculture. Child labour in agriculture is a global issue that is harming children and damaging the agricultural sector by perpetuating rural poverty. For instance, when children are forced to work long hours, their opportunity to attend school and develop their skills is limited, which interferes with their ability to access decent and productive employment opportunities later in life.

Child labour is defined as work that is inappropriate for a child’s age, affects children’s education, or is likely to harm their health, safety or morals.

Not all work carried out by children is considered child labour. Some activities may help children to acquire important livelihood skills and contribute to their survival and food security. Yet, much of the work children carry out in agriculture is not age-appropriate and might interfere with their wellbeing. For instance, this is the case of children working in fields where pesticides have been applied, staying up all night on a fishing boat, or carrying heavy loads.

Some of the key factors that contribute to child labour in rural areas are low family incomes, few livelihood alternatives, poor access to education and limited labour law enforcement.

To address these issues, FAO supports the integration of child labour considerations into national policies and strategies for rural development, working with partners such as ILO, IFAD, IUF and IFPRI/CGIAR, through the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA).

In particular, FAO works to:

- Develop the capacities of governments and agricultural extension services to address child labour in agriculture. In order to enable national capacity building and institutional development, FAO works to promote a greater knowledge base on child labour across countries. As part of these efforts, FAO has developed demand-driven and country-tailored materials that offer practical guidance, such as the Handbook for monitoring and evaluating child labour in agricultural programmes and the Visual Guide "Protect Children from pesticides!". Together with ILO, FAO has also launched the e-learning course End child labour in agriculture, designed for agricultural...
At country level:

- **Cambodia**: Child labour mitigation and prevention have been integrated in the national fisheries and aquaculture legislation.

- **Tanzania**: FAO capacity building activities have been replicated by the Government at local level.

- **Malawi**: Child labour elimination has been embedded in the national contract farming strategy, for the first time in Africa.

- **Niger**: Guidelines to prevent children’s exposure to pesticides have been integrated in the national curriculum for crop protection agents.

- **Mali**: A national roadmap to prevent child labour in agriculture has been adopted by the Government.

- **Lebanon**: Awareness raising and advocacy activities have been carried out on the importance of fighting child labour in agriculture amongst vulnerable groups including Syrian refugees.

Across its work areas, FAO is paying increasing attention to child labour issues and ensuring that these are considered in its global mechanisms. For instance, in 2013, a revised International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management was approved at the 38th Session of the FAO Conference to encourage governments and the pesticide industry to adopt measures to reduce children’s vulnerability to exposure.

At regional level:

- Government officials, civil society, and UN staff have been trained on child labour issues in 17 countries of Latin America and in 6 countries of Africa.

FAO’s work in countries such as Cambodia, Lebanon, Mali, Niger, Malawi and Tanzania, the respective governments are increasingly addressing child labour as an integral part of national agricultural policies.

- **Advocate and raise global awareness on the topic.** FAO engages in major international initiatives, including the World Day Against Child Labour, to raise awareness on priority areas of action to eradicate child labour in agriculture.

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What has been done so far
Migration is a key component of development process and yet, in poor rural areas, it is increasingly becoming a desperate need rather than an voluntary option for diversifying and increasing households’ income.

In many low- and middle-income countries, poverty, food insecurity, lack of employment opportunities, limited access to social protection, natural resource depletion and the adverse impacts of environmental degradation and climate change are pushing rural people, especially women and youth, to migrate in search for better opportunities.

The impact of rural out-migration on the areas of origin can be positive or negative, or a combination of both. Migrants and returnees can contribute investments, remittances and skills for rural development, but migration can also result in the loss of the most vital and dynamic part of the workforce, with negative consequences on agricultural productivity. For this reason, policies and actions addressing migration need to target its root causes and enhance the positive impacts of migration to rural areas, while minimizing its negative consequences.

Agriculture and rural development can make a significant contribution to address the root causes of rural migration by giving poor people alternative and sustainable livelihoods options for moving out of poverty within or near their own communities.

On the other hand, safe, orderly and regular migration from rural areas, including seasonal migration, linked to agricultural calendars, can benefit migrants and their communities. Agriculture and rural development policies and programmes are also key to creating an enabling environment to harness the development potential of migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, especially as regards poverty reduction and local agriculture and rural development.

In particular, FAO works to:

- Generate evidence on migration and rural development to support policy making. This is done by providing guidance for Member States to collect, analyse, disseminate and use disaggregated data on international and internal migration flows (including seasonal/circular migration), their root causes, and their contribution to agriculture and rural development; and by conducting assessments in migration-prone areas to identify opportunities in
Quick facts

- There are 244 million international migrants (UNDESA, 2015) and 763 million internal migrants (UNDESA estimate, 2013).

- About one-third of all international migrants are in the 15-34 age group (UNDESA, 2015).

- Accounting for 48 percent of all international migrants, women are almost as likely to migrate as men (UNDESA, 2015).

- Almost 40 percent of international remittances are sent to rural areas, suggesting that a significant share of international migrants comes from rural areas (IFAD, 2013).

Mitigating distress migration of rural youth in Tunisia and Ethiopia

In Tunisia and Ethiopia, FAO is implementing the project “Youth mobility, food security and rural poverty reduction”, aimed at mitigating economic distress migration of rural youth by promoting rural employment opportunities in the areas of origin. The Project will shed light on how to address the root causes of rural distress migration and strengthen the positive impact of mobility on rural areas of origin. In this framework, FAO is conducting trainings for agriculture line ministries and local institutions on how to address migration issues and, at the same time, is supporting young unemployed agro-entrepreneurs in the implementation of projects to generate rural employment.

- **Support capacity development** at country and regional level, by identifying policy gaps and strengthening the capacities of national stakeholders (especially agriculture and rural development ministries) to better incorporate migration and labour mobility in agriculture and rural development policies and programmes.

- **Disseminate lessons learned and best practices**, in order to promote the utilisation of available knowledge, technology and good practices in agriculture and rural development and scale up innovative solutions in different socio-economic contexts prone to migration. This includes measures on how to mobilise diaspora to invest in agriculture, promote financial literacy and inclusion in sending and receiving areas, build rural capacities to use remittances for investments, and facilitate the integration of returnees in rural areas by promoting decent employment opportunities.

- **Facilitate policy dialogue** on rural migration across key sectors and among stakeholders, such as government, civil society and private sector, including producers’ organizations, as well as migrants and diaspora groups.

- **Facilitate partnerships and advocate** at national, regional and global levels on a common position on migration, addressing its root causes, changing negative perspectives on migration and supporting safe, orderly and regular migration from rural areas.
On average, women make up 40 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, ranging from 20 percent in Latin America to 50 percent or more in parts of Africa and Asia. They generally work as subsistence farmers, paid or unpaid workers on family farms or as entrepreneurs running on- or off-farm enterprises. In addition, women provide the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work in rural areas, thereby supporting current and future generations of rural workers within their households and communities.

Despite their significant contribution to the agriculture sector, rural women typically find themselves in disadvantaged positions. Compared to their male counterparts, they tend to face more restricted access to productive resources and assets, financial services and social protection.

Gender-biased social norms, laws and practices also limit women’s involvement in gainful work and their participation in workers’ and producers’ organizations, especially in organized labour institutions such as trade unions.

Addressing this bias is a key component of sustainable development strategies. Increasing rural women’s access to decent employment opportunities is key to improving their productivity and earning power, which in turn raises family incomes and food security.

FAO aims to empower rural women through decent work in order to realize their untapped potential, which can bring social and economic benefits not only to women, but also to their families, communities and rural economies at large.

Quick facts

- Women make up 43 percent of the global agriculture labour force, ranging from 20 percent in Latin America to 50 percent or more in some parts of Africa and Asia (FAO SOFA, 2011).
- Women have less access than men to productive resources (i.e. land, skills, services) and employment opportunities (FAO, 2011).
- Evidence shows that in many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, women’s participation in agriculture is increasing (FAO SOFA, 2011).
On the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, more than 1,000 families engage in fisheries for their livelihoods. Yet, they represent one of the most vulnerable sectors, lacking the resources and opportunities they would need to lift themselves out of poverty.

Many of these mollusc gatherers are women who work in the informal sector and do not have access to social protection, despite all the risks posed by their work.

FAO has helped women fishers engage with the Government to obtain legal recognition of their work and achieve better working conditions to improve their livelihoods. Thanks to this support, women mollusc gatherers have worked towards a participatory mollusc sustainable use plan, which will guarantee the use permits that ensure their labour rights and allows them to legally capture the product. Such permit will also grant them access to healthcare, retirement pensions and social security.

In particular, FAO works to:

- **Develop greater knowledge** on women’s contribution to the rural economy and on the impact of gender-sensitive rural employment interventions. For example, FAO has produced detailed country profiles on the gender inequalities in rural employment for countries such as Ghana, Malawi and Tanzania.

- **Support governments** in the formulation and implementation of decent rural employment strategies that are responsive to gender issues. The joint FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women programme on Accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women is an example of FAO’s ongoing effort to promote decent work for rural women at country-level.

- **Foster greater policy dialogue** and coordination between key stakeholders to promote rural women’s empowerment. FAO works with governments, civil society and the private sector to identify feasible policy options that address gender inequalities in rural labour markets.
Improving working conditions in rural areas

Working conditions in rural areas tend to be difficult, precarious and hazardous because rural jobs are mostly informal, with no written contracts and little or no protection. People tend to work for long hours, earning low incomes and often have to combine more than one activity to make a living.

FAO works to address the key factors that impact job quality in rural areas, including Occupational Safety and Health (OSH).

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous sectors in terms of work-related fatalities, non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases. Workers face risks that include operating heavy machinery and equipment, lifting weights and working with animals on a daily basis. They are often exposed to harsh climate conditions, excessive noise and vibration, chemicals, infectious agents, dust and other organic substances. Yet, due to the remote nature of rural areas, agricultural workers often lack access to the necessary health, information and training services to adequately respond to these health hazards. Vulnerable groups are particularly affected, including migrants, seasonal workers, the elderly, women and children.

The role of FAO:

FAO’s work focuses on promoting safer practices across agricultural sub-sectors. For instance, to reduce occupational hazards related to pesticide use, FAO promotes an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programme that combines different management strategies to grow healthy crops and encourage natural pest control mechanisms.

Jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), FAO also performs Secretariat functions for the Rotterdam Convention, which contributes to ensure decent work standards in rural areas by regulating the import and export of certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides.
Policy-makers depend on rigorous evidence to adequately address the challenges that prevent decent rural employment promotion.

The collection and diffusion of sound and detailed socio-economic information at local, regional and national levels is necessary to increase understanding on the key issues faced by millions of rural workers and thus design sustainable rural development interventions. Yet, in many developing countries, accurate socio-economic data on employment-related aspects is scarce, and existing data typically remains of low quality.

The common lack of disaggregated data, as well as insufficient adaptation of analytical tools to the specific contexts of rural and agrarian economies, frequently results in the creation of inadequate employment and labour indicators.

FAO works closely with academia and other partners, including the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the World Bank, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) to improve international efforts for data collection and analysis on decent rural employment. In particular, FAO works to:

- Promote the collection and use of solid statistics and analysis on rural labour markets, employment trends and migration flows. In doing so, FAO acknowledges the need for sector-specific studies and for producing analyses that capture differentiated impacts by gender and age.
- Increase understanding of rural labour markets and employment patterns, including informality and seasonal work. FAO analyses and evaluates the labour impacts of agricultural and rural development interventions in varying contexts through mixed methods and in-depth country case studies, as well as cross-country analyses for selected themes.
- Facilitate the dissemination of good policies, interventions and practices. Through tailored policy support and the collection of good practices, FAO encourages the replication and adaptation of successful interventions worldwide.
An integrated set of tools and resources

The main FAO publications and resources on decent rural employment are systematized in the online Decent Rural Employment Toolbox.

The Toolbox has been designed to provide guidance to policy makers, rural development practitioners and FAO staff.

It is organized in modules that cover the main components of FAO’s approach to mainstreaming decent rural employment.

Incorporating decent rural employment in the strategic planning for agricultural development

This guidance document aims to assist policy makers in incorporating decent rural employment priorities in the design of agricultural development interventions, across different subsectors and value chains. It includes a Rapid Guide to quickly identify the most relevant contents.

> fao.org/3/a-i5471e.pdf

Handbook for monitoring and evaluation of child labour in agriculture

The Handbook offers guidance and tools for assessing the impacts of agricultural and food security programmes and projects on child labour in family-based agriculture. In addition, it sensitizes agricultural programme staff on the importance of including child labour prevention in their planning.

> fao.org/3/a-i4630e.pdf

Addressing rural youth migration at its root causes: A conceptual framework

This publication reviews the drivers of distress migration of rural youth and explains how migration can contribute to rural development.

> fao.org/3/a-i5718e.pdf

Youth and agriculture: Key challenges and concrete solutions

This publication identifies potential solutions to overcome the challenges faced by youth while engaging in agriculture.

> fao.org/3/a-i4630e.pdf
E-learning course
*Promoting productive employment and decent work in rural areas*

This course introduces the concepts of **productive employment and decent work** and its relevance for food and nutrition security and rural poverty reduction. It also explains how to integrate employment and decent work considerations into **agricultural strategies** and programmes, with focus on specific groups such as: rural women, youth and children in the agricultural sector.

> fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/course/DRE

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E-learning course
*End child labour in agriculture*

This FAO-ILO e-learning course is designed to build knowledge among **agricultural stakeholders** about the importance of addressing child labour in agriculture, including livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture. It aims to build specific skills, depending on work-related responsibilities and tasks, by providing **concrete ideas** and **guidance** that can be applied in agricultural policy and programming.

> fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/course/CL

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Policy database on employment and decent work in rural areas

The **Policy Database** is an **online inventory** of current national, regional and global policies, programmes and studies that are relevant to promoting decent jobs in the rural areas of developing countries. The tool is aimed at **policy makers** and advisors of agricultural and employment-related planning, programme managers in ministries of agriculture and rural development and employment, as well as other national and regional **stakeholders**.

> fao.org/rural-employment/policies/en/
CARIBBEAN

• Guidance note on the inclusion of rural youth issues into national policies
• Training of youth ambassadors
• Small grants scheme for young agripreneurs

GUATEMALA

• National Decent Work Policy
• Mesa técnica in San Marcos
• Ventanilla Municipal de Empleo Rural in Tejutla

SENEGAL

• Steering Committee to develop the Rural Youth Employment Policy
• Pilot models for young agripreneurs
• National Observatory of Rural Employment

NIGERIA

• Master trainers trained in the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools methodology
• Trainings for 6,618 young agripreneurs
Country projects at a glance: some results

**MALAWI and TANZANIA**
- Decent work included into national policies
- Field-test of methodologies and tools
- Child labour elimination embedded in the Malawian contract farming strategy

**KENYA**
- Youth Agribusiness Strategy
- Pilot activities in 2 districts to implement the National Strategy

**UGANDA**
- Technical Working Group and 4 Regional Fora to develop the Strategy for Youth in Agriculture
- Institutional tools to assess youth needs
- Assessment of labour standards in agriculture

**ETHIOPIA**
- Trainings and equipment for 375 young agripreneurs
- Growth and Transformation Plan focused on youth employment

**TUNISIA**
- Innovative mechanisms to create rural jobs
- Coaching and equipment for 50 agripreneurs to create more than 100 direct jobs

**CAMBODIA**
- Child labour mitigation and prevention integrated in the national fisheries and aquaculture legislation

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In its work to end hunger, malnutrition and poverty, FAO has identified five key priorities, each channelled through a Strategic Programme. This initiative is being implemented in the context of:

The FAO Strategic Programme to REDUCE RURAL POVERTY