



Country Bahamas
Institution (s)
Tipo Government

 **LARC/20/3**

Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies

In keeping with the UN’s commitment to “leave no one behind”, the Hand-in-Hand initiative recognizes that this requires tailoring a strategic approach that is evidence-based, market-oriented and taps into the under-supported potential of agriculture and agri-food value chains to transform lagging rural territories. Highlighting the incorporation of technological innovations as drivers of change by gathering market, agro-ecological, and farm-level information to identify agricultural areas where there are opportunities for farmers to achieve their potential income and move out of hardship.

The Bahamas, like many other Small Island Developing States, has experienced crippling impacts of natural disasters that has left rural and peri-urban economies of our islands devastated. In response, the Government of The Bahamas has recognized the fundamental principles of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and supports its approach by engaging the FAO in a technical project that will generate knowledge related to the cost and effectiveness of public investments to boost agriculture, food systems and other rural economic activities that are inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

The project implements an integrated mechanism for food and nutrition security, using business incubator services and technological tools and approaches to match business opportunities presented in the agro-food system with special attention for income generating and employment opportunities of the most vulne-

nable groups, including youth and women living in the rural and peri-urban areas of the two most vulnerable islands.

Particularly, it will address the low income and lack of employment between youth and women specifically among family farmers in Grand Bahama and Abaco Island, the islands hardest impacted by Hurricane Dorian. Family farmers do not have regular and permanent access to technology and knowledge to develop economic enterprises serving the national and regional food markets while supporting local sustainable livelihoods.

Critical gaps in technologies, knowledge, entrepreneurial and organizational skills and financial services will be addressed. This is relevant for the conception, development and implementation of sustainable and climate smart practices and models, using a business incubator model already tested in other countries in the region. Strict attention will be given to basic food safety standards at all stages of the food system. It addresses the Ministry’s request to FAO to support the strengthening of skills and hands-on experience to step-by-step build territorial Food Systems that are Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient. It will assist in catalyzing further resource mobilization to scale-up lessons learnt and good practices. It is of the hope that with the support of this project, Bahamas can constitute a model for other SIDS setting the tone on embracing innovative models for food system transformation while implementing the Hand in Hand Initiative.

The government has an ambitious plan to achieve its SDGs’ targets by 2030. The development and transformation of the current food system into a more sustaina-





ble, inclusive and resilient one is an integral part of such a plan. Through the successful implementation of the mentioned project, The Bahamas will be able to continue its progression towards the achievement of SDG 1 and SDG 2.



LARC/20/4

Sustainable and climate resilient agriculture

The Bahamas has not been exempted from the grave challenges of transforming its agriculture and food systems to achieving more sustainable and resilient production. As in the case of other SIDS, Bahamian agricultural challenges include - limited arable land and freshwater resources, harsh climate change impacts, inadequate food processing, limited market access, de-fragmented policy structures and unhealthy consumption habits that protests the development of a sustainable food system.

For a paradigm shift away from the unsustainable practices of conventional agriculture, it is vital for a transition towards holistic and inclusive food systems that use resources more efficiently, and produce in a more equitable way through resilient systems low in GHG emissions. The Bahamas is in agreement with FAO that to achieve “zero hunger” (SDG 2), safe “water and sanitation” (SDG 6), “responsible production and consumption” (SDG12), “climate action” (SDG 13), “life below water” (SDG 14) and “life of terrestrial ecosystems” (SDG 15), there is an urgent need to take an integrated approach that considers sustainable and resilient production systems, the agro-ecosystems and economics of farming communities, and an efficient enabling governing framework that adapts to new challenges.

By applying ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable food and agricultural systems, agro-ecology can help guide such a transition. Agroecology focuses on the interactions between plants, animals, people and the environ-

ment in closed loops – managing these interactions according to local specific context, while addressing global challenges. Equally important, agroecology calls for responsible and effective governance mechanisms at different scales—from local to national to global—to support producers to transform their systems following agroecological concepts and practices.

The foundations of agroecology strongly aligns with the three objectives outlined in the discussion document LARC/20/4. The Bahamas is in support of agroecology and FAO’s on-going work on agroecology to strengthen sustainable and climate resilient agricultural food systems.



LARC/20/8

Improving FAO’s capacities to serve member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Bahamas has been a Member State of FAO for 45 years and in good relations has received support in policy development and technical assistance through assessments for improved capacity building.

Over the years the country has benefited from several catalytic Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCP) that addressed key food concerns and proved to be possible solutions to increasing food security. However, due to the nature of TCPs the projects remained at preliminary stages with normative work completed but limited operationalization of activities in the country thereby reducing the potential level of impact and continuity of the work.

It is noted that following the devastation of Hurricane Dorian in The Bahamas, the FAO has shown its support through increased engagements of assessing the agriculture and marine sectors to provide technical guidance on its rehabilitation. As a result, the number of projects being implemented in the country has increased; most notably, being a participating country in the Hand-





in-Hand Initiative and the regional School Feeding Programme. However, with limited technical and financial resources the success of the projects may be reduced to only normative work if FAO's business model is not revised and a more programmatic approach is not taken.

As the representative of the Caribbean Member States on the FAO Council, The Bahamas speaks on its behalf and these States by endorsing the proposed actions of the document LARC/20/8 and by extension the complimentary work and interventions proposed in the document LARC/20/6. It is pertinent that the FAO increases its capacities to serve our Member countries while strengthening the network of decentralized offices to truly achieve regional food security.



LARC/20/9

Innovation and Digital Agriculture

The low productivity of the agricultural sector in The Bahamas continues to threaten food security and the sustainability of rural livelihoods systems. The adoption of improved technology, and adaptation to a specific local context, informed by robust farm-based agricultural research and testing, is critical to the process of productivity enhancement and the realization of a competitive advantage in Bahamian agriculture.

Through the Hand-in-Hand project supported by the FAO, The Bahamas will begin the move towards increasing innovation and digitalization of the agri-food sectors that will provide transformational information to farmers and agribusinesses, while empowering youth to be engaged in the sectors for continued economic growth.



LARC/20/10

COVID-19 update and adjustments to FAO's regional priorities to address impact on food security and nutrition, and food systems

The Bahamas, like the rest of the world, is experiencing the debilitating impact of COVID 19. The pandemic has significantly impacted food systems and overwhelming health sectors and economies.

The Caribbean región depends heavily on the now stagnant tourism sector. National lockdowns have caused the demise of many small business resulting in thousands of Bahamians depending on social net programs eg. national insurance, food packages or food vouchers

Food imports have been relatively consistent however the cost of food has increased, placing another burden on citizenry. The Bahamas imports upwards of 90 percent of its food and any disruption in supply could cause a major impact on the country. Local production is small and currently insufficient to feed the country hence the need to increase production.

The Bahamas fully endorses FAO's global COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme and is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the various meetings held and look forward to the organization's assistance in promoting regional trade. FAO is currently supporting our country through its Hand in Hand Initiative project, Fisheries Rebuilding project and national school feeding program.

As with all national disaster events, cracks in the food system are revealed, once again bringing the issue of food insecurity to the forefront. To deal with this matter head on, an Emergency Food Plan was created to increase production ensuring food availability and accessibility, creating jobs and stimulating economic activity. The Government of The Bahamas has subsidized hydroponic systems and will have distributed 20,000 backyard gardening kits, all in an effort to increase the capacity of farmers. Chicks and feed have been given away free of charge to qualified farmers to jumpstart the poultry sector. Also provided in the plan is food processing training and advice on post-harvest storage of surplus crops and improved extensión services and data collection via technology.

We are encouraged and believe that attaining SDGs 1 and 2 is indeed possible with FAO's continued assistance and guidance.

