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AFRICA SOLIDARITY TRUST FUND FOR FOOD SECURITY

Table of Contents

- I. Background
- II. Scope
- III. Governance Structure
- IV. Financial Mechanisms and volume of contributions
- V. Activities

Executive summary

1. The creation of an Africa Solidarity Trust Fund for Food Security was endorsed at the 27th FAO Regional Conference for Africa held in Brazzaville-Congo, and officially launched during the 38th Session of the FAO Conference in June 2013.
2. The Fund is so far one of the few Africa-led innovative mechanisms of mobilizing resources from Africa for Africa, which intended to strengthen food security across the continent by assisting countries and their regional organizations in their short, medium and long-term efforts to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, eliminate rural poverty and manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Contributions received so far are slightly over USD 40 million, Equatorial Guinea and Angola being the two major financial contributors.
3. Governed through a Steering Committee (SC) and a Fund Assembly (FA), with support of a Programme Management Unit (PMU), the Fund will support activities aligned with the renewed strategic framework and priority programmes of FAO, which are consistent with the priorities for Africa as determined during the Regional Conference.

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4. Following an initial call for proposals, five envisaged country programmes and action plans (Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali and Niger) have been approved by the SC as catalysts to ongoing efforts to eradicate hunger, reduce malnutrition and poverty. Implementation of these programmes will start very soon and at the same time, consideration is being given to a follow up call for proposals, thus increasing gradually the number of countries receiving support from the Trust Fund.

Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference

The Conference is encouraging countries to make additional financial contributions to the Fund.

Africa Solidarity Trust Fund for Food Security

I. Background

1. The idea of an Africa Solidarity Trust Fund for Food Security was launched during FAO's 2012 Regional Conference for Africa held in the Republic of the Congo, when the host, President Denis Sassou Nguesso, called for greater solidarity between African nations to fight hunger in a sustainable manner. Participants from member countries, UN agencies, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations reaffirmed their commitment to lead national and regional efforts to defeat hunger and malnutrition, improve the livelihood of farmers, and guarantee food and nutrition security for all, working within the priorities set under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). They called for joint and coordinated action, as well as for technical and financial support, and as such, endorsed the proposal made by the Chair of the Regional Conference for the creation of an African-funded solidarity trust fund to support food security in the continent.
2. The Fund became a reality in February 2013 with a first donation of USD 30 million by the Government of Equatorial Guinea. The Fund was officially launched in June 2013 during the 38th Session of the FAO Conference and subsequently presented and discussed at the High-Level Meeting (HLM) organized under the theme "*Toward African Renaissance: Renewed Partnership for Unified Approach to End Hunger in Africa by 2025 within the CAADP Framework*" in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 2013, convened by the African Union Commission (AUC), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Instituto Lula (IL) of Brazil. Administered by FAO, the Fund will support Africa-led, Africa-owned initiatives in the framework of the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) to boost agricultural productivity and food security in the region.

II. Scope

3. The Trust Fund is proposed for African governments and partners to commit resources for the implementation of national or regional food security initiatives. It will support activities aligned with the renewed strategic framework and priority programmes of FAO, to enhance governments and regional organizations capacities to:
 - i. contribute to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition;
 - ii. increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner;
 - iii. reduce rural poverty;
 - iv. enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems at local, national and international levels; and
 - v. increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.
4. These areas are consistent with the priorities for Africa which were reaffirmed by participating countries during the Regional Conference. They are also in line with the priorities of the Country Programming Frameworks.
5. Initially and taking into account the need to prioritize resource allocation, the Fund will consider threats, crisis and disasters affecting the continent including those of a

transboundary nature. Activities will focus on helping countries to increase resilience. Priority will also be given to activities focusing on the eradication of hunger and malnutrition in the medium and long term. The Fund will allow countries to tap into FAO expertise to develop solutions through partnerships including South-South Cooperation (SSC), knowledge management and up-scaling of field-proven good practices, successful initiatives and programmes as well as the promotion of young African professionals.

III. Governance Structure

6. The Fund is governed through the following two bodies: the Steering Committee (SC) and the Fund Assembly (FA), which decide on priorities and approve proposed activities. The implementation of activities is coordinated and directed by the Programme Management Unit (PMU), established by FAO for this purpose.
7. The Steering Committee (SC): The SC is hosted at FAO headquarters in Rome and is composed of representatives of the major contributors to the Fund, the Chair of the FAO Regional Africa Group, the President-in-Office of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, a representative of the African Union and a representative of FAO. The SC meets at least twice per year, or more frequently, as required. It is supported by an FAO secretariat. Generally, the SC provides strategic guidance and sets priorities for activities financed by the Fund, and approves annual work plans proposed by the PMU. It oversees and monitors the progress of activities, and makes recommendations, as required.
8. The Fund Assembly (FA): is comprised of all resource partners who have contributed to the Fund, recipient countries and any entity that is willing to support the activities of the Fund (e.g. NGOs, civil society organizations, etc.). It serves as a consultative forum which allows all Members to engage in information sharing on achievements, lessons learned, emerging issues and the future development of the Fund. The SC informs the FA as appropriate via e-mail.
9. The Programme Management Unit (PMU): FAO has established a PMU in the FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAF), under the oversight of the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative, RAF. The PMU, in close collaboration with the SC, supports the implementation of resource mobilization, management and communication action plans of the Fund, with particular attention to ensuring adequate planning and implementation of projects and programmes.

IV. Financial Mechanisms and volume of contributions

10. Financial contributions to the Fund are credited to a specific FAO account. Funds are administered in Africa by the relevant FAO Representation or by the Regional Office for Africa, as appropriate, in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of FAO.
11. The current volume of the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund is over USD 40 million, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Cameroon, as well as civil society organizations from the Republic of the Congo, have contributed so far. More contributions are expected from other countries in the future.

V. Activities

12. After the official launch of the Fund, FAO assisted in the preparation of governance documents namely the guidelines and Terms of References for the Steering Committee (SC), the Fund Assembly (FA), and the Programme Management Unit (PMU). These documents are considered dynamic and will be adapted to new circumstances over time.
13. During the first Steering Committee meeting, held on 13 December 2013, the Representative of Equatorial Guinea was elected as Chair for one year, as Equatorial Guinea was the first and major contributor to the Fund. On this occasion the Fund Governance Document was endorsed.
14. In order to move swiftly towards achieving the objectives of the Fund, the Steering Committee decided, in a first round, to allocate about USD 10 million to programmes and projects. A call for project ideas was launched in May 2013 by the PMU and FAO's Strategic Objective Coordinators, Regional and Subregional Offices in Africa, and technical departments in headquarters were requested to submit proposals. Priority areas identified for consideration in the initial call were the following:
 - i. increasing resilience of rural livelihoods in countries in protracted crisis or prone to recurrent natural disasters;
 - ii. preventing transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases;
 - iii. assessing and monitoring food insecurity;
 - iv. implementing initiatives to mitigate impacts of food price volatility;
 - v. replicating and scaling up of field-proven good practices and programmes, particularly, in the crisis countries of the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.
15. A total of 47 project proposals were received and screened by the PMU; twelve of them were retained and consolidated into six programme areas that were prioritized for consideration. The concept notes for the shortlisted programme areas were reviewed by the FAO Corporate Programmes Monitoring Board Working Group¹. Five envisaged country programmes and action plans (Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Niger) have been approved by the SC as catalysts to ongoing efforts to eradicate hunger, reduce malnutrition and poverty. Implementation of these programmes will start very soon and consideration is being given to a second set of additional countries, thus increasing gradually the number of countries receiving support from the Fund.

Reporting

16. The following reports will be prepared on an annual basis by the PMU:
 - financial report: a general overview and status of funds received and disbursed including breakdown for each programme; and
 - technical report: a progress report detailing results for each project/ programme.

Auditing

17. The Fund will be subject to the internal and external audit regime as laid out in the Financial Regulations, Rules and directives of FAO. Reports of the External Auditor of

¹ The Corporate Programmes Monitoring Board (CPMB) is a new governance arrangement to specifically address the FAO delivery of the programme of work, involving the management of Strategic Objectives and Assistant Directors-General (headquarters departments and regional offices).

FAO will be submitted to the Governing Bodies of FAO and made available as per FAO's financial rules and regulations.

Evaluation

18. Activities financed by the Fund will be evaluated in accordance with the standard policies and practices of FAO. Where appropriate, tripartite evaluations involving a donor representative, a representative of a beneficiary country and a representative of FAO may be conducted in accordance with agreed Terms of Reference.

Visibility/Communications Strategy and Action Plan

19. Communication of the results achieved through projects/programmes funded by the Fund is imperative. Civil society, members of governments and resource partners will be made aware of the results achieved. Appropriate visibility will be given to this important initiative and its impact. A communication strategy and action plan will be developed and implemented by the PMU, under the leadership of the FAO Regional Office for Africa.