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منظمة  
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# CONFERENCE

## Forty-first Session

Rome, 22-29 June 2019

### Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals/ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

#### Executive Summary

The 40<sup>th</sup> session of the FAO Conference in July 2017 commended FAO's efforts for continuous engagement in the implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national, regional and global levels, and provided guidance to both the Secretariat and to Members.

FAO has been working with countries to address several interconnected development challenges that cut across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many countries are showing strong political commitment and are using the SDGs to map opportunities and challenges for achieving transformational change. However, progress has been slower in translating the aspirations of the SDGs into actionable national development plans that contain a clear contribution from food and agriculture.

Achieving the SDGs requires strengthened capacities to develop and support integrated policies, the collection and analysis of data, the establishment of robust multi-stakeholder partnerships that support whole of society engagement, and the mobilization of means of implementation, especially finance and investment, science and technology, access to markets, and capacity development. This present paper highlights the main challenges, summarizes ongoing work of FAO, and suggests ways in which the Organization can accelerate efforts to strengthen its support to Members in realizing the ambitious sustainable development vision of the 2030 Agenda.

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### Suggested action by the Conference

The Conference is invited to:

1. **Recall** that food and agriculture are central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially to eradicating poverty, ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition, and to restoring a sustainable balance between people and planet, and that food and agriculture sectors contribute materially to at least 14 of the 17 SDGs;
2. **Express concern** over the rise of hunger, malnutrition and obesity, the concentration of poverty in rural areas, persistent social and gender inequalities, degradation or further depletion of natural resources in numerous locales, and the marked loss of global biodiversity;
3. **Recognize** that accelerated, scaled-up action is required to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and **encourage** Members to incorporate food and agriculture in national plans and the reinvigorated UN country programming process as means to achieve the SDGs;
4. **Take note** of progress made by FAO through its Strategic Programmes in support of country, regional, and global implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.
5. **Encourage** FAO, in the context of its Strategic Programmes and the ongoing United Nations Development System (UNDS) Reform, to strengthen its support to Members in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda by:
  - a) strengthening the provision of integrated policy support to Members, consistent with FAO and UN norms and standards;
  - b) assisting Members in building their capacities for data collection, analysis and use of data for evidence-based decision-making, especially in relation to SDG indicators;
  - c) supporting Members and their partners in developing partnerships to mobilize and deliver means of implementation, including technology, and provide enabling frameworks for improved collective action at all levels to achieve the SDGs;
  - d) developing new business models to link FAO policy and technical work to finance and investments, guided by the vision of the 2030 Agenda.

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## I. Introduction

1. The 40<sup>th</sup> session of the FAO Conference in July 2017 commended FAO's efforts for continuous engagement in the implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national, regional and global levels.

2. In particular, the Conference: noted the progress in developing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) global indicators, and looked forward to periodic reporting by the Secretariat; recommended FAO further strengthen support provided to national stakeholders, so as to ensure that food and agriculture are prominently reflected in the nationally identified priorities, as well as to enhancing national stakeholders' capacity on monitoring and reporting; encouraged the Secretariat to monitor progress on engagement in the 2030 Agenda, including through provision of reports to the United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF); noted the complementary nature of national, regional, and global indicators, and encouraged Members to report on the global indicator framework as endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); and encouraged strengthening of partnerships and alliances to support mobilization of resources for the implementation of SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

3. The alignment of the reviewed FAO Strategic Framework with SDGs has allowed the Organization to strategize its support and commitment to its members, resulting in an increased reflection of issues related to FAO's mandate across the 2030 Agenda, and enabled FAO to use its programmes and tools in support of country efforts toward the nationalization and implementation of SDGs. Through the Medium Term Plan 2018-21, FAO's Strategic Programmes are contributing to 14 SDGs, 36 SDG targets and 45 unique indicators.<sup>1</sup>

4. This paper provides an overview of global progress on SDGs related to food and agriculture and FAO's engagement with the HLPF (section II), as well as further development of SDG indicators (section III). It reviews the main challenges faced by countries in capitalizing on the potential of the food and agriculture sectors to sustainable development (section IV), identifies key capacities required to transform food and agriculture sectors and to accelerate their contribution to the 2030 Agenda, and summarizes FAO's main activities carried out in support of member countries (section V). The paper concludes with suggested actions for countries and FAO on the way forward (section VI).

## II. Global progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

5. Although the global community continues to make progress in some key areas across the SDGs<sup>2</sup>, the overall level and pace of achievement is not sufficient to achieve the 2030 Agenda<sup>3</sup>. Accelerated action is needed for food and agriculture sectors to be able to meet the dietary needs of a growing global population, and to safeguard the biodiversity and natural resource base upon which inclusive, sustainable and resilient food and agriculture systems depend<sup>4</sup>.

6. The most recent estimates suggest that hunger and all forms of malnutrition are on the rise, with alarming trends of undernutrition, overweight and obesity<sup>5</sup>. In spite of the worldwide increase in food production, inequalities in access to food persist (SDG 10). Trends in extreme poverty (SDG 1), conflict (SDG 16), migration and urbanization (SDG 11) compound the impacts of population pressure and growth, price volatility and market inefficiencies. For those living in rural, isolated parts of the world and in many rapidly expanding urban areas, accessing diverse high-quality, healthy diets (SDG 3) remains challenging. Moreover, the economic and social benefits of agricultural transformation, rural employment (SDG 8) and agro-industrialization (SDG 9) are not widely shared. At the same time, food and agricultural sectors, as a key determinant of the sustainability of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/my734en/my734en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Countries continue to reduce the incidence of extreme poverty (SDG 1), improve access to health services (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4), and succeed in lowering the rates of maternal and child mortality (SDG 3).

<sup>3</sup> *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018*. UN, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> *The Future of Food. Alternative Pathways to 2050*. FAO, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018*. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2018.

production and consumption (SDG 12), are contributing to climate change (SDG 13),<sup>6</sup> to the unsustainable use of natural resources (SDG 14 and SDG 15),<sup>7</sup> and to the loss of biodiversity (SDG 2, SDG 14 and SDG 15).<sup>8</sup>

7. In order to ensure food and agriculture remain high priority in the 2030 Agenda, FAO continues its engagement in global and regional fora for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda with its active engagement in the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) and its preparatory process, resulting in the reflection of food and agriculture sectors in the Ministerial Declarations of the HLPF in 2017 and 2018.<sup>9</sup> In addition, outcomes of policy discussions of FAO's technical committees, regional conferences and selected statutory bodies are reported annually as inputs to the HLPF, and progressively included SDGs in their deliberations. FAO strengthened its engagement in the preparations of Regional Sustainable Development Fora, convened by the UN Economic Commissions to bring a regional perspective to the review progress and policy discussions including the harmonization of the 2030 Agenda with regionally agreed policy priorities and frameworks.

### III. FAO as custodian for 21 SDG indicators

8. FAO has responded to its responsibilities as custodian agency for 21 SDG indicators across six SDGs. FAO has continued to engage in the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG), participating in discussions on global data reporting, capacity development, resource mobilization and international statistical governance<sup>10</sup>.

9. During the past two years, FAO finalized the methodological development of nine SDG indicators. As of March 2019, all 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship have international established methodologies. In 2019, FAO provided data and storylines for 16 SDG indicators, five of which were reported for the first time. These inputs have been used to update the global SDG database and to prepare the 2019 global SDG Progress Report. FAO's future work on SDG indicators will focus on data disaggregation and on developing complementary indicators for the private sector and for project monitoring.

### IV. Key challenges at the country level

10. Countries have demonstrated strong political commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and have established comprehensive strategies for sustainable development, created institutional and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms, and engaged in dialogue concerned stakeholders. However, countries are also facing serious challenges in translating the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda into actionable national development plans and programs. New arrangements have often proven too weak to enable implementation of complex integrated strategies. They are challenged by the need to evaluate and manage interdependencies synergies and trade-offs - among goals and targets and to harmonize processes and policies across sectors and layers of government.

11. In addition, many countries fail to mobilize the necessary 'means of implementation', with underfunding of investments that are critical to transformational change<sup>11</sup>.

12. Most importantly, the role of food and agriculture in achieving most SDGs is often not fully recognized in national plans and budgets and within countries, food and agriculture-related line ministries are rarely fully engaged in national SDG processes. In the context of UN reform, countries

<sup>6</sup> *The State of Food and Agriculture in the World 2016*. FAO, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> *The State of the World's Forests 2018*. FAO, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture 2019*. FAO, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLS/2017/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLS/2017/1&Lang=E) (E/HLS/2017/1- Ministerial Declaration 2017); [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLS/2018/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLS/2018/1&Lang=E) (E/HLS/2018/1 – Ministerial Declaration 2018)

<sup>10</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>

<sup>11</sup> *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2019*. United Nations, Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2019.

should benefit from the mainstreaming of food and agriculture in the UN country programming process through the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), as to bringing actionable data, policy support, technical tools, partnerships and resources to drive and sustain national action.

## **V. Support to country-level food and agriculture transformation for national achievement of the SDGs**

13. The Secretary-General identified four capacities to be strengthened for the UN to provide the support needed for countries' achievement of the SDGs: improved collection and analysis of data; integrated policy support; strengthened capacity to support and sustain partnerships for delivery of means of implementation; and capacity to mobilize significantly scaled-up finance and investment to drive transformative change<sup>12</sup>.

14. As a specialized agency, FAO has well-developed functions and programmes in each of these areas, and is leading UN system-wide efforts to improve related capacities in relation to food and agriculture.

### **A. Data collection, analysis and evidence-based decision-making**

15. The quantity of information required to monitor the 2030 Agenda and its 232 individual SDG indicators challenges national statistical capacities. Despite an overall improvement in global reporting, data coverage related to food and agriculture targets is still very sparse. Recent progress in data availability has been insufficient to ensure that the majority of countries, especially developing countries, are able to monitor food and agriculture related SDG indicators. Countries must expand further, and in many cases establish new institutional frameworks, and mobilize the necessary human and financial resources, to collect, analyse and disseminate data for the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.

16. In close collaboration with FAO Regional and Country Offices, FAO's Chief Statistician (OCS) provided comprehensive assistance on capacitating statisticians on indicators under FAO custodianship. In total, more than 80 countries have received support through these activities.

### **B. Implementation of integrated policies**

17. As noted by the Secretary-General's above-referred Report, a review of UNDS capacities "revealed insufficient capacities for data management and the provision of integrated policy advice." Furthermore, "Strengthening the system's capacity for policy advice will also be critical as Governments increasingly request support in how best to integrate SDGs into their national plans and governance structures, make the necessary trade-offs and prioritize and sequence their actions."

18. Through its Strategic Programmes, FAO has strengthened its advocacy for multi-sectoral approaches to food and agriculture sectors. It promotes regional and national dialogues on the potential of integrated approaches to food and agriculture to revitalize rural landscapes by increasing employment and incomes, reducing impacts on natural resources, and promoting value addition and employment in food processing and other off-farm activities.

19. FAO is developing tools for identifying critical "nexuses" (linkages, interdependencies and trade-offs) among interconnected policy objectives related to food and agriculture. FAO has aligned its flagship publications with the 2030 Agenda,<sup>13</sup> providing a thorough analysis of drivers behind global, regional and national trends with respect to relevant SDGs indicators.

20. FAO's Strategic Programmes have developed integrated approaches to promote policy and institutional environments for an accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the country level.

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<sup>12</sup> Repositioning the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: <https://undocs.org/A/72/684>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.fao.org/publications/flagships/en/>

Most recent developments include the Strategic Framework to tackle Extreme Poverty (SP3), the Urban Food Agenda (SP4),<sup>14</sup> the strengthened partnership with the One Planet Network/10YFP on Sustainable Food Systems (SP4),<sup>15</sup> the Corporate Framework to support sustainable peace in the context of the Agenda 2030 (SP5),<sup>16</sup> the Sustainable Food Systems toolkit (SP4),<sup>17</sup> and the guidelines for Transforming Food and Agriculture to Achieve the SDGs- 20 interconnected actions to guide decision-makers (SP2) discussed by FAO Technical Committees.<sup>18</sup>

21. Despite considerable progress, important challenges remain. The formulation of integrated policies for the transformation of food and agriculture requires overcoming the traditional sectoral thinking in food and agricultural policymaking, establishing coordination mechanisms with other key governmental institutions (including social affairs, economic development health, among others), coordinating central and provincial governments.

### **C. Partnerships for transformational change at all levels**

22. The 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognize that the ambitions of the SDGs require a new approach to mobilizing 'means of implementation', which are understood to include not only public funding and private finance, but also access to markets, science, technology and innovation, as well as mechanisms to promote capacity development. Robust partnerships, and in particular partnerships with the private sector are seen as primary vehicles for mobilizing support at all levels. Partnerships and alliances are also key to ensure that vulnerable groups and stakeholders are not left behind.

23. Unlocking the potential of partnerships requires the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms for stakeholder engagement in participatory planning processes and their implementation at different levels, local to national. The alignment of partner objectives with national development strategies and the principles of the 2030 Agenda is a powerful way of unlocking forces to drive transformational change. In particular, partnerships need to be accessible to vulnerable groups, especially rural actors, small-scale food producers, family farmers, women and youth.

24. FAO continues to raise awareness and mobilize support towards its vision for Zero Hunger, mobilizing stakeholders and creating partnerships and alliances including the regional Parliamentarians alliances against hunger, convened in Madrid in 2018. The alliance allows parliamentarians to share experiences and best practices regarding the achievement of SDG 2.

25. Since the last Conference, FAO has strengthened its engagement in several multi-stakeholder partnerships aiming at the transformation of food and agriculture. Major partnerships include the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, catalysing actions at country levels through action networks; the UN Decade on Family Farming (UNDIFF), launched in May 2019, and aiming at mobilizing all concerned stakeholders in support of the fundamental role of Family Farming for achieving sustainable development and leave no one behind; and the One Planet Network/10YFP Sustainable Food Systems Programme, coordinating the UN and other stakeholders for integrated approaches for advancing the transition to sustainable food systems. FAO is scaling-up its activities in support of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) and engaging in collaborations with parliamentarians across the globe.

26. FAO has also enhanced partnerships and work on key topical areas of sustainable agriculture including in the fields of agro-ecology, climate smart agriculture, the global soil partnership, landscape-level management and disaster risk reduction. Strengthening small producers' beneficial participation in production for markets has emerged as a particularly important means of advancing progress toward SDG targets on eliminating extreme poverty and doubling the productivity and incomes of family farmers, pastoralists, fishers, foresters and indigenous peoples. FAO has enhanced work to promote pro-poor access to markets, with a strong focus on both local "territorial" markets,

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3151EN/ca3151en.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-food-system>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/I9311EN/i9311en.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/toolkit/introduction/en/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/I9900EN/i9900en.pdf>

where most food is produced and sold in developing countries, as well as longer value chains that offer higher returns to producer investments.

#### **D. Financing and investment**

27. Realizing the ambition of the SDGs requires significant scaling up of financial resources. In the words of the Secretary-General, "to unlock the trillions of dollars needed to achieve the SDGs, Governments will need more support to attract, leverage and mobilize investments of all kinds - public and private, national and global."<sup>19</sup> Estimates suggest that at current levels of public and private investment, developing countries face an average annual funding gap of USD 2.5 trillion<sup>20</sup>. The magnitude of the funding gap calls for the identification of new and innovative funding mechanisms, including most importantly private finance. While Official Development Assistance (ODA) and public investment will continue to be critical assets for ensuring that no one is left behind, these funds will be insufficient by themselves to enable the transformative changes called for by the 2030 Agenda.

28. More and more, donors are seeking ways to leverage public or grant funding through combining public with private investment. This presents special challenges and novel opportunities for FAO. The challenge relates to developing and experimenting with new business models that reposition and repurpose FAO's technical and policy capacities in ways that can help promote private investment in the sustainable development of food and agriculture.

29. Since the last Conference, FAO resource mobilization efforts have been increasingly shaped by the SDGs. FAO has taken action to enhance support to countries in integrating SDGs in country investment plans, including the National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs) and supports dialogue with the private sector on the topic in a range of countries.

30. Closing the funding gap requires that countries more accurately estimate the different types of financial resources and mechanisms required to optimize and sustainably support coherent, integrated plans for national sustainable development. Established FAO capacities in economic and financial analysis and investment planning can be deployed to help countries in these areas as well.

### **VI. Suggested actions for countries and FAO**

31. Transformation of the food and agriculture sectors is critical for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It has the potential to eradicate poverty and reverse growing inequality, end hunger and all forms of malnutrition, and restore a sustainable balance between people and the planet by restoring and preserving biodiversity and natural resources, reducing food and agriculture's climate footprint and improving agriculture's contribution to climate mitigation and resilience.

32. Based on the latest trends, accelerated and scaled-up action is required by countries and the global community to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Conference may wish to:

- encourage Members to incorporate food and agriculture into national plans and the reinvigorated UN country programming process as means to achieve the SDGs;
- take note of progress made by FAO through its Strategic Programmes in support of country, regional, and global implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.
- encourage FAO, in the context of its Strategic Programmes and the UNDS Reform, to strengthen its support to Members in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda by:
  - strengthening the provision of integrated policy support to Members, consistent with FAO and UN norms and standards;

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<sup>19</sup> *Repositioning*, paragraph 44.

<sup>20</sup> *World Investment Report 2014*. UNCTAD, 2014. *Unlocking SDG Financing: Findings from Early Adopters*. UNDOCO and Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2018.

- assisting Members in building their capacities for data collection, analysis and use of data for evidence-based decision-making, especially in relation to SDG indicators;
- supporting Members and their partners in developing partnerships to mobilize and deliver means of implementation, including technology, and provide enabling frameworks for improved collective action at all levels to achieve the SDGs;
- developing new business models to link FAO policy and technical work to finance and investments, guided by the vision of the 2030 Agenda.