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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Twenty-seventh Session

28 September - 2 October 2020

FAO's Programme of Work in Food and Agriculture under the FAO Strategic Framework

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of FAO's achievements in the food and agriculture sector during the 2018–19 biennium, analyses major trends and emerging issues that will influence FAO's work and activities in the food and agriculture sector, and lays out the priority areas of FAO's work in these domains in the 2020–21 biennium and beyond.

Suggested actions by the Committee

- Take note and provide any comments on the achievements, and the developments and trends identified with respect to the food and agriculture sectors (sections II and III);
- Provide guidance on the main priorities for FAO's work in food and agriculture in 2020-21, as well as for the review of the Strategic Framework and the preparation of the Medium Term Plan 2022-2025 (Section IV); and
- Review and advise on the global developments and their implications for the food and agriculture sector.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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I. Introduction

1. The FAO Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2018–21 (reviewed) and Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2020–21 were approved by the FAO Conference at its 41st Session in June 2019.¹ The Conference appreciated the close alignment of the FAO Strategic Objectives with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and highlighted the importance of the contribution of FAO to the full implementation of the repositioning of the United Nations Development System².

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development defines the context in which FAO and its Members will be working toward reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieving country specific targets. As food and agriculture hold the key to realizing the 2030 Agenda, FAO is well-positioned to act as a facilitator to assist all countries in accelerating progress across all SDGs, in particular SDG 1 (eradicate poverty) and SDG 2 (end hunger and all forms of malnutrition) while sustaining biodiversity and natural resources, and addressing climate change through gender/equitable food systems transformations.

3. FAO has launched the “*Hand-in-Hand Initiative*”, an evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative aiming to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2). The initiative adopts a robust match-making approach that proactively brings together target countries with donors, the private sector, international financial institutions, academia and civil society to mobilize implementation and introduces a framework for monitoring and impact analysis. FAO’s new Office for SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs³ will work closely with the Hand-in-Hand Initiative to address the unique and complex food security and nutrition challenges of these countries and their vulnerable populations.

4. Agricultural innovation can contribute to the transformation of agriculture and food systems necessary to achieving the SDGs. Accelerating and scaling up innovation is fundamental for achieving the SDGs and leveraging emerging opportunities for reaching a world free from hunger, poverty and malnutrition. In order to facilitate the adoption of innovative approaches, the use of modern science and technologies including digital solutions, FAO established a new Office for Innovation to further consolidate and strengthen FAO’s innovative spirit, including innovation of mindset, of cooperation models, and application by digitalization.

5. The preparation of the new Strategic Framework started in 2020⁴ with the final document to be presented to the 42nd session of the FAO Conference in 2021.⁵ As inputs from Technical Committees represent an important step in the schedule of Governing Body input and oversight, this Technical Committee is requested to provide guidance on areas of technical priority in 2020–21 and beyond, both with the view to guide future work and in the context of developing the new Strategic Framework.

6. Areas of focus in reviewing the Strategic Framework will include aligning the results framework with the Agenda 2030, strengthening strategic synergies and partnerships, and elaborating technical priority areas. The results framework will also integrate FAO country level results, balancing Member-specific priorities and the FAO corporate priorities and in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the most important

¹ C 2017/7

² CL 163/4, Information Note 2, November 2019 provides further information on FAO’s engagement with the UN Development System repositioning.

³ Small Island Developing States (SIDS); Least developed countries (LDCs); Land-locked developing countries (LLDCs)

⁴ See CL164 report; paragraph 18: <http://www.fao.org/3/nd238en/nd238en.pdf>

⁵ CL 163/4, Information Note 1, November 2019, provides detail on the process for consultation on the development of the new Strategic Framework.

instrument for planning and implementation of UN development, and the humanitarian-development and peace nexus, activities in each country.

7. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis with cascading socio-economic and environmental effects on the food and agriculture sectors. FAO has developed a comprehensive COVID-19 response in order to assist Members according to their specific context and needs, and which is articulated around 7 umbrella programmes.^{6,7} The pandemic demanded an organization-wide concerted action⁸ to reduce the impacts of the pandemic on the agriculture and food sectors and assist countries to better respond and avoid an increase in rural poverty and hunger.

8. In this context, the present document first provides a brief overview of FAO's achievements in the food and agriculture sector in the 2018-19 biennium. It then outlines key global and sector specific developments and trends, which will influence FAO's future work in food and agriculture. The last section lays out the priority areas of FAO's work in food and agriculture during 2020-21 and beyond.

II. Achievements in FAO's Work in Food and Agriculture in 2018-19

9. FAO continued to keep hunger, food insecurity, addressing all forms of malnutrition and sustainable natural resource use at the forefront of the development agenda. The Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2020^{9,10} states that hunger is on the rise again globally and undernutrition continues to affect millions of children. The 2020 *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report* highlights that an estimated 2 billion people in the world did not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food and healthy diets are unaffordable to at least three billion people, especially the poor, in every region of the world.¹¹ Greater support is needed for small-scale food producers and family farmers and increased investment in infrastructure and technology for sustainable agriculture. Women are more likely affected by moderate or severe food insecurity on every continent and the gender gap in food security is larger among the poorest people and least-educated people, widowed and those living in suburbs of large cities¹² especially children.

10. The Programme Implementation Report 2018-19 (PIR) documents FAO's achievements during the biennium in relation to FAO's Strategic Objectives and related SDG indicators, including gender equality, nutrition, climate change, governance and statistics, and the regional results are available on the FAO web site¹³.

11. At global level, FAO is strengthening strategic partnerships through platforms and initiatives promoting international cooperation, such as: the Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028); UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030); UN Decade of Action; Sustainable Food Systems Programme of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP); UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030; International Decade (2018–2028) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development, the upcoming Decade on Indigenous Languages (2022-2032); and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture.

12. FAO reported to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July of 2019 and 2020¹⁴ to conduct in-depth reviews of progress on the 17 SDGs and

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/partnerships/resource-partners/covid-19/en/>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/nd059en/nd059en.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/nd059en/nd059en.pdf>

⁹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26158Final_SG_SDG_Progress_Report_14052020.pdf

¹⁰ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24978Report_of_the_SG_on_SDG_Progress_2019.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/CA9692EN.pdf>

¹² FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2019.

¹³ <http://www.fao.org/pir>

¹⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020>

supported countries to undertake their Voluntary National Reviews. At the 2020 HLPF, FAO launched, with UN-Water, the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework catalyzing water investments, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance. The UN Summit on the SDGs in September 2019, issued a political declaration “Gearing up for a Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development”¹⁵, calling for a decade of action to deliver the SDGs by 2030.

13. FAO gained major recognition as a key player on the international climate arena, especially through its high-level participation and contributions to UNFCCC pre-COP, COP24 and COP25, in the preparation of the IPCC special report on Climate change, land and food security and sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies, Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, as well as the 2019 UN Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit.

14. For over a decade, FAO has been working with countries to scale up climate investment for the agricultural sectors, leveraging partnerships with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and more recently with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to build climate-resilient development pathways. In the first two years of GEF-7 (mid-2018 to mid-2020), FAO has supported more than 35 countries in accessing nearly USD 100 million from the GEF in priority areas such as agrobiodiversity conservation and mainstreaming biological diversity conservation practices into agriculture sectors, including fisheries and forestry, through Impact Programmes such as for Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration and for the Drylands Sustainable Landscapes. FAO, as a GCF grant-implementing entity¹⁶ assists countries in the development and implementation of country-led projects on climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable land and water management and other practices. To date, the total value of FAO’s GCF portfolio is USD 571.5 million with most funding approved during 2019-2020.

15. FAO is playing a lead role in supporting countries in transitioning towards sustainable agriculture and food systems. The 41st Session of the Conference (June 2019) endorsed the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers.¹⁷ The Code¹⁸ provides a locally-adaptable framework and voluntary set of principles and actions to serve the different stakeholders. It also responds to the third UN Environment Assembly (UNEA3) declaration on soil pollution and supports the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM).

16. The 41st Session of the FAO Conference adopted Resolution 7/2019 “Further integration of sustainable agricultural approaches, including agroecology, in the future planning activities of FAO” and adopted Resolution 6/2019 reaffirming the global commitment to addressing the growing global threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Subsequently, in its 163rd Session, the Council adopted the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming and approved the revised version of the Ten Elements of Agroecology.

17. FAO launched the report on *The State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*,¹⁹ the first global assessment of biodiversity for food and agriculture prepared under the guidance of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The report finds that while most of the biodiversity, at genetic species and ecosystem levels, is in decline, management practices and approaches considered biodiversity-friendly are increasingly being adopted. The Commission agreed on an intersessional process to identify needs and possible actions with regard to biodiversity for food and agriculture, aiming to have them adopted as a Global Plan of Action by the FAO Conference.

¹⁵ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/4>

¹⁶ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/ae/fao>

¹⁷ Report of the 41st Session of the Conference (C 2019/REP/paragraph 49(b))
<http://www.fao.org/3/na421en/na421en.pdf>

¹⁸ International Code of Conduct for the sustainable use and management of fertilizers
(<http://www.fao.org/3/ca5253en/ca5253en.pdf>)

¹⁹ <http://www.fao.org/state-of-biodiversity-for-food-agriculture/en/>

18. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on 21 December 2018, proclaimed 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) and invited FAO, with the IPPC Secretariat, to serve as the lead agency for IYPH and spearhead activities to raise awareness of the role that plant health plays in achieving the SDGs and the role of the IPPC and national and regional plant protection organizations in protecting plant health.

19. The 25th Session of COAG recommended that FAO play a greater role in assisting Members in developing their agricultural innovation strategies through comprehensive diagnosis and needs assessments²⁰. The Conference requested that FAO support countries and regions in enhancing their commitment and engaging more effectively in transitioning towards sustainable agriculture and food systems, by encouraging innovation in agriculture. FAO organized the first International Symposium on Agricultural Innovation for Family Farmers in Rome, Italy, on 21–23 November 2018. The Symposium highlighted the need for assessment of agricultural innovation systems to identify the gaps and promote integrated policies and increased investments to create an enabling environment for innovation²¹. FAO is developing strategies, guidelines and knowledge portals, and promoting a holistic approach to developing and accessing appropriate innovation for smallholders and family farmers, to enable regional organizations and governments to strengthen their integrated policies and increase investments, the assessment and diagnosis of agricultural innovation systems (AIS) and the development of an innovation strategy to ensure a coordinated response to the needs of its Members, in line with the FAO's new Office for Innovation.²²

20. FAO continued its leading and innovative work on Indigenous Food systems. In the first High Level Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food systems, convened by FAO in 2018, indigenous peoples, Members, universities and research institutions shared their knowledge about indigenous peoples' food systems agreeing on the need to create a Global Hub on indigenous food systems hosted in FAO. FAO presented the preliminary results of the ongoing profiling of over 12 indigenous food systems across the world and co-organized the expert seminar on Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Peoples' Fisheries in the Arctic Region, in September 2019.

21. In strengthening global dialogue and partnerships around sustainable food systems, FAO's lead role in the preparatory process towards the United Nations Secretary-General's UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 offers the prospect of greater alignment of people-centered initiatives to affirm the centrality of inclusive food systems to the sustainable development agenda, support food systems transformation and inclusiveness, and a more coherent approach to support countries in fulfilling their commitments.

22. FAO continued to promote innovative and inclusive approaches to sustainable agricultural production, including, among others, Conservation Agriculture, Sustainable mechanization²³, protected cultivation, Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), agroecology²⁴, biotechnology, conservation agriculture, sustainable mechanization and protected agriculture and sustainable pastoralism.

23. Conservation Agriculture (CA)²⁵ is currently practiced by farmers in over 78 countries on over 180 million hectares globally (12.5 percent of annual cropland), with most of the farmers benefitting from CA being smallholders. FAO has organized and participated in a number of international and national events, including the Forum on Black Soil Conservation in Northeast China

²⁰ Report of 25th Session of the Committee on Agriculture, 26–30 September 2016. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mr949e.pdf>

²¹ Proceedings of the International Symposium <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4781en/ca4781en.pdf>

²² FAO. Adjustments to the programme of work and budget 2020-21, 163rd Session of the Council, 2-6 December 2019. <http://www.fao.org/3/mz825en/mz825en.pdf>

²³ <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-agricultural-mechanization/en/>

²⁴ The Ten Elements of Agroecology (CL 163 Rev. 1) were approved by the 163rd Session of FAO Council (CL 163/Rep) <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7173en/ca7173en.pdf>

²⁵ <http://www.fao.org/conservation-agriculture/en/>

in August 2019 and provided technical support to the organization of the 8th Congress on Conservation Agriculture (8WCCA), postponed to July 2021 due to COVID-19.

24. Agroecology: the Scaling up Agroecology Initiative was launched together with major UN partners and other partners from Academia, Civil Society, Private and Investors Sectors during the UN Partners Advisory Mechanism meeting in January 2019. The Initiative builds on the outcomes of multi-stakeholders regional seminars, FAO COAG 26²⁶, and 40th Conference²⁷, guidance from Regional Conferences, and the Second International Symposium: Scaling up Agroecology to achieve the SDG's²⁸ and an action plan was developed. FAO concluded its stocktaking exercise on its engagement on Agroecology based on the 2018-2019 Work Plan²⁹.

25. Following the recommendations of COAG 26³⁰, the Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) was developed by FAO and external partners based on the Ten Elements of Agroecology, and published in December 2019.³¹ TAPE aims to measure the performance of Agroecological transitions across the different dimensions of sustainability and applies to all types of agricultural systems and is being piloted in over 10 countries. FAO published the document "FAO's Work on Agroecology: A Pathway to Achieve the SDGs"³¹ and is finalizing its first study bringing together Agroecology and climate change titled "The potential of Agroecology to build sustainable livelihoods and resilient food systems".

26. The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) programme continued the promotion of designation of GIAHS sites, whereby nine new sites have been added bringing the total GIAHS sites to 62 in 22 countries, and its work on refining criteria and development of basic indicators for monitoring. Various technical workshops and training projects at national, regional and global levels were conducted, and collaboration expanded. The next stage of the GIAHS programme, aiming at scaling up the impacts of GIAHS, is under preparation.

27. The GIAHS Secretariat provided technical guidance to individual country requests and prepared for the scaling up of activities and its next phase, seeking collaboration in the areas of biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, poverty reduction, promotion of family farming and marketing, digitalization of GIAHS among others.

28. Since COAG 26, during which the African Union Commission and FAO launched the Framework for Africa of Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (SAMA)³², African countries have revised their agricultural strategies and field implementation of SAMA has been supported through regional networking and investments into empowerment of hire service providers.

29. Biotechnology: The global community meeting of the FAO GM Foods Platform³³, was held on 10-13 September 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. The FAO GM Foods Platform is sharing results of the GM food safety assessment that countries have conducted globally.

30. Transboundary animal disease control: FAO has strengthened the control of high impact transboundary animal diseases globally, and in countries and regions through The Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs). The global secretariat has focused on the coordination of activities for the control of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Peste des

²⁶ (COAG/2016/6)

²⁷ (Para.43h; C2017/REP)

²⁸ <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/second-international-agroecology-symposium/en/>

²⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/I9007EN/i9007en.pdf>

³⁰ COAG 26 report > <http://www.fao.org/3/my349en/my349en.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/tools-tape/en/>

³² <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-agricultural-mechanization/resources/publications/details/en/c/1156531/>

³³ <http://www.fao.org/gm-platform>

petits ruminants (PPR), Rinderpest and more recently African Swine Fever (ASF). Main achievements include:

- FAO continues to engage with Members, international and regional entities and partners to promote implementation of the FAO-OIE global foot-and-mouth disease control strategy. A new four-year strategic plan was established by the European Commission on FMD to control FMD and other Similar Transboundary animal diseases. Five additional reference centres for zoonotic and emerging pathogens, FMD and PPR have been designated to provide technical support.
- To counter the Peste des petits ruminants (PPR), a disease killing small ruminants spread in over 70 countries in Africa, the Near and Middle East, and Asia, the PPR Global Eradication Programme was established in 2015³⁴ with the vision for a world free of PPR by 2030. FAO assisted countries and regions to formulate their National strategic plans and regional strategies and to increase capacity of vaccines laboratory production. A total of 58 countries are already free of PPR. The 128th Session of the Programme Committee and the 164th Council³⁵ encouraged FAO to pursue more affordable solutions to mobilise resources, including through partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders.
- African Swine Fever: the GF-TADs initiative for the Global control of ASF (2020-2025) was launched with the aim to tackle strategic challenges, promote national, regional and global partnerships, strengthen prevention and preparedness measures, and minimise the impact of ASF which spread into Asia in the last biennium, impacting food security and livelihoods..

31. FAO continued to support the One Health approach to address food chain threats at global and country levels, through the Global Health Security Agenda and Emerging Pandemic Threats programmes implemented in more than 30 countries in Africa and Asia. ECTAD trained more than 7 500 professionals from 23 countries and enhanced laboratory performance in over 20 countries and aided the investigation of 244 disease outbreaks in 20 countries in 2018, and 398 disease outbreaks in 18 countries in 2019.

32. FAO continues to support Members in capacity development to prevent, detect and respond to high impact animal and zoonotic diseases through the use of several tools. FAO has strengthened the early warning forecasting capacity for Rift Valley Fever (RVF) in eastern Africa region using a web-based RVF Decision Support Tool (DST). FAO has supported several regional bodies to reduce the risk of high impact transboundary and zoonotic disease threats, such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Sectoral Working Group on Livestock (ASWGL) and the Central Asian Animal Health Network (One-Health) for regional epidemiology and laboratory networks and services.

33. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) was addressed through FAO's Action Plan³⁶, working with WHO and OIE in the context of the One Health Approach and the Inter-Agency Coordinating Group established by the Secretary-General in 2016. FAO increased its overall support to countries in developing and implementing National Action Plans and their capacity building in the areas of awareness, surveillance, governance and good practices to combat AMR. The 163rd session of Council has agreed to include an indicator on AMR in the results framework. The proposal of an AMR indicator was discussed at the 128th Session of the Programme Committee³⁷ and the 164th Session of Council³⁸ and referred for further improvement at the technical level. FAO has also submitted to COAG 27 the next 5 year FAO Action Plan 2021-2026 for guidance and approval. FAO provided scientific advice on AMR in support of Codex standard setting and on the role of the

³⁴ (C 2015/REP 43.d)

³⁵ (CL 164/REP.17.j)

³⁶ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5996e.pdf>

³⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/nc439en/nc439en.pdf>

³⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/nd238en/nd238en.pdf>

environment in foodborne AMR, AMR via foods of plant origin, the impact of Anti-Microbial (AM) use in crops, the role of biocides, and potential risks for AMR and their role in minimizing transmission of foodborne AMR. FAO works closely with stakeholders in the feed sector to help reduce the use of antimicrobials in feed and improve animal nutrition as an alternative to the use of antimicrobials in animal production, especially growth promoter antimicrobials.

34. FAO has been very active in assessing the impact of climate change on sustainable livestock production, especially through high-level participation and contributions to UNFCCC pre-COP, COP24 and COP25, with focus on studying the effect of climate change on control of livestock diseases and increasing the awareness of climate change on animal disease, and providing integrated policy advice and capacity development.

35. By mandate of the 22th Session of COAG (2010) to FAO the [Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock \(GASL\)](#) has facilitated policy dialogue and action among diverse stakeholders to make livestock systems more sustainable. GASL provides an innovative multi-stakeholder platform for policy dialogue and joint action of more than [113 institutional partners](#), enhancing awareness, political will and capacity to generate and share a wide range of technical and policy solutions for sustainable livestock at international, country and local level, produced by well-known research institutions through the GASL Action Networks, as per its current [2019-2021 Action Plan](#).

36. FAO continues to produce guidelines, manuals and tools to improve health and husbandry practices, develop livestock value chains, design evidence-based livestock strategies and investment plans, and build the capacity of Members to adopt these practices and use these tools. The Pastoralist Knowledge Hub³⁹ established by FAO has triggered the attention to the needs and livelihoods of pastoralists, by building strong international partnership for sustainable pastoralism, facilitating the participation of pastoral representatives in the policy decision making process, and sharing information.

37. FAO has also been at the forefront of tackling increasing regional and transboundary food chain threats from plant diseases and pests⁴⁰ focusing on threats such as the Fall Armyworm (FAW) in Africa, Near East and Asia and the Desert Locust outbreaks in East Africa, Yemen and South West Asia, Red Palm Weevil (RPW) in North Africa and Near East, and Fusarium wilt of Banana (TR4) in Latin America., Highlights include:

- Fall Armyworm: the rapid spread of the fall armyworm (FAW) prompted the new three-year Global Action for Fall Armyworm Control⁴¹ to ensure a strong coordinated approach at country, regional and global levels, which aims to mobilize USD 500 million over 2020–22 to take coordinated measures to strengthen prevention and sustainable pest control capacities⁴². The FAW secretariat is preparing a high-level conference planned for October 2020 with relevant stakeholders and representatives of Member infested by FAW.
- FAO launched regional programmes for Red Palm Weevil eradication, for North Africa and Near East (September 2018), and for Latin America and the Caribbean (September 2019), as an urgent response to reporting of Fusarium wilt of banana (TR4) for the first time in the region to strengthen the national capacities and raising awareness in the region.
- FAO supported Members in implementing the Desert Locust preventive control strategies through the Desert Locust Control Regional Commissions. FAO launched the alarm on Desert Locust outbreaks in northeast Africa and Saudi Arabia in February 2019, and in Yemen and the Horn of Africa in July 2019. Since early 2020, FAO has supported the Greater Horn of Africa

³⁹ <http://www.fao.org/pastoralist-knowledge-hub/en/>

⁴⁰ Refer to: Preventing, anticipating and responding to high-impact animal and plant diseases and pests (COAG/2020/6)

⁴¹ <http://www.fao.org/fall-armyworm/global-action/en/>

⁴² COAG/2020/INF/4

in battling one of the worst Desert Locust infestations in decades. By applying lessons from the 2003-2005 locust outbreak in West Africa, FAO activated fast-track mechanisms to move swiftly to support governments through implementing resilience programmes focused on anticipatory action to avert a food crisis. By end June 2020, FAO raised USD 162 million from the total of USD 311.6 million appealed for Eastern Africa, Southwest Asia as well as anticipatory action for West Africa and the Sahel.

38. IPPC: The IPPC community developed governance principles and a draft standard on commodity-based phytosanitary measures to facilitate safe trade. Annually, seven IPPC Regional Workshops (RWs) were coordinated. The IPPC Strategic Framework 2020–2030 and the five-year investment plan of the IPPC Secretariat for 2021–2025 were endorsed. The IPPC ePhyto Solution was completed, with over 80 countries registered for application.

39. Highly Hazardous Pesticides: FAO is a lead partner and provides tools and technical assistance to its Members in the transition away from highly hazardous pesticides. Highly hazardous pesticides are being addressed through the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), FAO/WHO International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management, FAO/WHO Guidelines on highly hazardous pesticides; and, the Rotterdam Convention, enabling parties to exchange information on and decide on future imports of certain hazardous chemicals. The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, hosted by FAO, provides technical assistance with a focus on supporting monitoring and data collection related to pesticide poisoning, both regarding human health and the environment, alternatives to hazardous pesticides and taking policy measures to ensure sustainable use of indispensable pesticides and information exchange among all Parties on these pesticides. Between mid-2018 and mid-2020, more than 110 Parties of the Rotterdam Convention received technical assistance and capacity building training.¹

40. FAO continues to develop guidelines and best practices in areas relevant to pollinators, such as, the use of chemicals in agriculture, protection programmes for native pollinators in natural ecosystems, promotion of biodiverse production systems. In 2019, FAO and WHO published a brochure on highly hazardous pesticides¹ with special attention for neonicotinoids pesticides. A module on risk assessment to bees has been integrated in the FAO Pesticide Registration Toolkit¹. FAO facilitates the implementation of the International Pollinators Initiative 2.0 (IPI 2.0). FAO launched a Pollination website to serve as examples for policy makers¹ and released the compendium “Towards sustainable crop pollination services: Measures at field, farm, and landscape scales”¹ on World Bee Day 2020.

41. Food Loss and Waste reduction: FAO’s Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction (SDG12) has increased coherence in FAO’s support to the measurement, awareness raising and technical assistance to reduce levels of food losses and waste, as well as an essential climate solution measure. This has led to improved policies, legislation and institutional frameworks at country and regional levels, while initiating a process for the development of a voluntary code of conduct for the reduction of food loss and food waste⁴³ at the global level. In 2019, FAO published the Flagship report ‘*The State of Food and Agriculture - Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction*’⁴⁴, providing new estimates of the world’s food post-harvest losses up to wholesale level. Particular progress was made on the development of a Global Food Loss Index (GFLI) in collaboration with UNEP with a proposal to split the SDG target 12.3 into two stages to measure: (i) “reduction of losses along the food production and supply chains”- supply oriented (GFLI), and (ii) “halving per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer level”- demand oriented – food waste index (FWI). In addition, FAO developed a Food Loss Analysis Case Study methodology, to identify the critical loss points in food supply chains and the underlying cause of the losses at these points including institutional, economic and socio-cultural factors, comprising gender inequalities.

⁴³ Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction (COAG/2020/13)

⁴⁴ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6030en/ca6030en.pdf>

42. FAO's framework for the Urban Food Agenda has streamlined its support and collaboration with national and subnational institutions increasingly incorporating food in urban and territorial policy development (SDG 11), contributing to more resilient and sustainable food systems both in urban areas and in the rural territories that supply them. The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Monitoring Framework published in 2019 provides indicators and practical guidance on how to monitor progress towards a more sustainable urban food system, linking sub-national targets and indicators with national level SDGs.
43. FAO's support to the development of sustainable value chains has resulted in enhanced public and private sector capacities and, through linking and scaling up several existing programmes under the Agrinvest initiative, greater levels of investment to promote inclusive and efficient agrifood systems (SDGs 2, 8, 9, 14, and 17). Progress on the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States (GAP), was presented at a HLPF high-level event on SIDS in 2019.
44. FAO is actively contributing to the implementation of the repositioning of the United Nations Development System, in view of reinforcing collaborative efforts with other UN partners and the Rome-based Agencies, and the adoption of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF), as a key instrument for planning and implementing of UN development activities at national level.
45. FAO has actively engaged in the global process leading up to and following the 2030 Agenda, including the Paris Agreement and the subsequent UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings and processes, 2019 UN Secretary General Climate Action Summit as well as CBD COP 14 in 2018. FAO contributed to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification COP 14 (September 2019) and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk reduction (Global Platform in May 2019). In 2020, called a 'super year for nature'⁴⁵, FAO will participate in the UNSG's Biodiversity Summit 2020 (New York, 22-23 September 2020).
46. For the first time, FAO systematically engaged with the UN Commission on population and Development (CPD) to prepare the 53rd Session, whose theme was '*Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development*', and highlighted the need to adopt holistic approaches to address complex interrelated sustainable development issues concerning food security, nutrition and population dynamics, which resulted in a [Report of the UN Secretary General](#)⁴⁶.
47. In recent years, focus of FAO's work related to the 2030 Agenda shifted toward support to countries in capacity development for integrated policy advice and monitoring progress toward the achievement of the SDGs. FAO has been designated as the UN custodian agency of 21 SDG **indicators** and as contributing agency for further five indicators in view of its contributions to the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs).
48. Major results in SDG monitoring include the methodological work for the reclassification of the remaining 5 Tier III indicators has been finalized, which led to their endorsement by the IAEG-SDG as international standards. This reclassification was vital, since it unlocks the potential for data reporting by countries and the effective delivery of capacity development support. Moreover, countries' capacity to track SDG progress has been strengthened with the provision of direct technical support to 27 countries, the organization of 12 regional training workshops attended by official statisticians from about 190 countries, the dissemination of 15 e-learning courses on FAO e-learning platform and various outreach activities. As a result, reporting rates on SDG indicators have increased from 32% in 2017 to 43% in 2019. FAO has published its first digital report on tracking progress on

⁴⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/nd212en/nd212en.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/013/65/PDF/N2001365.pdf?OpenElement>

food and agriculture-related SDG indicators⁴⁷, showing that the world is not on track to meeting the majority of SDG targets related to sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition.

49. In order to address the current huge data and capacity gaps, FAO has developed a comprehensive programme for scaling up capacity development support on SDG monitoring, which aims to help countries align national and global indicators, invest in alternative data sources to reduce the cost of data collection, strengthen the institutional coordination among national data producers, and improve their capacity to use SDG indicators in decision-making processes. During the last biennium, USD 1 million were allocated for this programme through the FMM mechanism, which is not sufficient to close the data gaps on SDG monitoring. Resources mobilization for this programme will therefore continue to be a top priority to accelerate SDG reporting during 2020-21.

50. Following final approval of SDG indicator 2.4.1 (proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture)⁴⁸ methodology in October 2019 by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators⁴⁹, FAO began the first dedicated data collection from countries, to assess data availability on relevant socio-economic and environmental variables across eleven sub-indicators. Information on national processes relevant to SDG 2.4.1 is also being collected. At the same time, FAO provides capacity development on this indicator. The AgriSurvey Programme and the 50X2030 Initiative⁵⁰ are the major efforts undertaken by FAO in collaboration with international and national partners to enhance data availability in countries in coming years.

51. FAO, together with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) published the ‘System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries’ in March 2020⁵¹ contributing to the overall SEEA accounting platform, which is endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission as the reference tool for bringing together economy and environment statistics, in support of natural capital accounting, ecosystems services evaluation, biodiversity assessment and SDG monitoring and reporting.

52. FAO has continued to provide integrated and comprehensive policy support. In close coordination with RBAs and the UN Country Teams, FAO assisted countries in the development of their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) providing comprehensive reports on national progress towards SDGs. FAO produced a range of guidance documents, such as ‘Transforming food and agriculture to achieve the SDGs’⁵², outlining 20 action areas, describing approaches, practices, policies and tools that interlink multiple SDGs, and involves participation and partnerships among different actors from public, private and community arenas.

53. FAO has supported policy dialogue and engagement with Parliamentarians to promote coherence and adequate resource allocations to achieve SDG2. The Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition, held in Madrid on 29 and 30 October 2018, with over 200 parliamentarians from around 80 countries, committed to stimulate the adoption of legislation, policies and programmes to improve and ensure a sustainable access to a healthy diet.

54. To enhance the resilience of agricultural livelihoods in the face of disasters, food chain crises and conflicts, the organization has contributed to prevent, reduce the impact, prepare and respond and recover to emergencies, moving from reactive disaster and crisis management approaches, toward more preventative, proactive multi-hazard risk management, where households, communities and governments are able to anticipate, absorb, recover and adapt for more resilient and sustainable

⁴⁷ <http://www.fao.org/sdg-progress-report/en/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5157en/ca5157en.pdf>

⁴⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7154en/ca7154en.pdf>

⁵⁰ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6785en/ca6785en.pdf>

⁵¹ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7735en>

⁵² [Transforming Food and Agriculture](#), FAO Rome 2018

agriculture and food systems. FAO continues its efforts to enhance understanding of how the agriculture sector is affected by disasters and crisis, including from animal and plant diseases and pests⁵³ to support Members to respond to the impact of many disasters, crisis and conflicts on their agriculture and food based livelihoods.

55. Nutrition: To support countries in the follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), FAO developed resource materials on nutrition-sensitive approaches to agriculture and food systems and e-learning modules for strengthening capacity for agriculture to have a positive nutrition impact. FAO, with WHO, published '*Strengthening nutrition action - A resource guide for countries based on the policy recommendations of the Second International Conference on Nutrition*' (2018) to assist countries in reviewing the appropriateness of the 60 voluntary ICN2 recommendations into country-specific actions for nutrition. FAO has advanced integration of nutrition-sensitive programming in FAO Country Programming Frameworks and the development of the new UNSDCF.

56. FAO, jointly with WHO, as Secretariat of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, continued advocacy for keeping nutrition on the agenda of policy-makers at international and national levels. In July 2019, together with WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and OCHA, FAO committed to accelerating action to end malnutrition in children and developed a joint framework and roadmap for the launch of a UN Global Action Plan on Child Wasting. In support of global advocacy and awareness for food systems transformation, in 2019 the 74th session of the UN General Assembly proclaimed the 29 September an International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, and 2021 the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables.

57. Food Safety: Under the umbrella theme "The Future of Food Safety – Transforming Knowledge into Action for People, Economies and the Environment", two events were held: the First FAO/WHO/AU International Conference on Food Safety, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 12-13 February 2019⁵⁴; and the International Forum on Food Safety and Trade, held at the WTO, in Geneva, Switzerland, on 23-24 April 2019, with the support of FAO and WHO. They highlighted the magnitude of the challenges and proposed knowledge-based actions to address food safety-related issues and underlined the crucial role that investment in effective food safety systems, including in knowledge, human resources, institutions and infrastructure, can play in achieving food safety goals.

58. In 2018-19, FAO fully met 95 percent (41) of its 43 Output indicators targets, while 5 percent (2) were not achieved. Approximately 79 percent of Output results were delivered at country or regional level. The Outcome Assessment describes a generally positive trend, with 16 out of 22 indicators showing improved performance status for the majority of countries between the years 2015 and 2019, showing that FAO's work and efforts provided a significant and measurable contribution to the improvements in the enabling environment needed to foster the achievement of the Strategic Objectives.

59. To measure progress at the level of FAO's Strategic Objectives, FAO aligned its results framework to the SDGs, and the 38 SDG-based SO indicators used to measure progress at the level of FAO's Strategic Objectives, are presented in the PIR 2018-19 at <http://www.fao.org/pir>.

III. Global developments and trends and their implications for the food and agriculture sectors

60. The following developments and trends arise from the topics considered by the current 27th Session of COAG, and the ongoing international processes addressing agriculture and food sectors. These include: food security and nutrition and health; food safety; natural resource management,

⁵³ <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/1106859/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.who.int/food-safety/international-food-safety-conference>

biodiversity, disaster and climate risks and crisis, threats to the food chain, and conflicts as well as overall transformation towards more resilient, inclusive and sustainable food systems.

61. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change continue to drive the context in which FAO operates. Other important developments in the areas of FAO's mandate include the proclamation of the Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028); UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (2021-30), UN SDG Decade of Action, UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-28), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) (2015-2030); the upcoming Decade on Indigenous Languages (2022-2032); and the UN Global Compact on Migration on Refugees adopted in 2018. The current and future developments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will also directly impact the work of FAO as the process to define the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework unfolds. The Summit on Biodiversity under the theme "Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development" will be convened on the margins of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly on 22 and 23 September 2020.

62. The trends and challenges in the agriculture and food sectors identified in the 26th session of COAG in 2018 are still valid, namely the need to enhance productivity, resilient and sustainable production and food value chains, food security and nutrition for a growing population, science and technology, innovations, increased interdependency of food systems, as well as to address biodiversity and environmental degradation, climate change with its range of growing climate extreme events and variabilities, increased competition for natural resources, and rapid urbanization with implications for rural areas and the local food systems ensuring the more marginalized groups, such as rural women and youth, are not left behind.

63. These global trends underpin the FAO Strategic Framework and include regional and sectoral trends and specificities, representing the main development challenges that countries and the development community are facing, and form the basis for updating the FAO Strategic Framework. The Regional Conferences, which were rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic to later in 2020, will provide a synthesis of major global and regional trends to set the basis for the new Strategic Framework of FAO that will be developed through a consultative process during 2020-21⁵⁵.

64. COVID-19 has threatened the health of people, economies, and food security at a global level. Urgent measures continue to be necessary to stabilize and protect the continuous functioning of the food supply chains globally, the livelihood of workers and the health of people everywhere. While the impact of COVID-19 in its urgency and with regard to its immediate impact has overshadowed many other existing trends, such trends continue to remain of high relevance to the work of FAO and to food and agriculture in general; and, in many cases, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the progress of these trends and/or exacerbated their negative impacts

65. In this context, FAO launched a corporate strategic foresight exercise in 2020 that will build upon the previous forward-looking corporate exercises as summarized in the FAO reports "*The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges*"⁵⁶ (FOFA TAC), which also provided the conceptual backbone for the FAO Medium Term Plan 2018-2021⁵⁷ and "*The future of food and agriculture – Alternative pathways to 2050*"⁵⁸ (FOFA 2050).

66. Preliminary findings of the Corporate Strategic Foresight Exercise, based on contributions from staff nominated from all FAO Divisions and in Decentralized Offices, point to already identified and newly emerging interconnected drivers and related trends, including the outbreak of epidemics and pandemics such as COVID-19. Major drivers and related trends identified are highlighted below:

a) Systemic (overarching) drivers:

⁵⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/nc850en/nc850en.pdf>

⁵⁶ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6583e.pdf>

⁵⁷ <http://www.fao.org/pwb/home/en/>

⁵⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/I8429EN/i8429en.pdf>

1. *Population growth and urbanization* are expected to increase and change food demand. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are leading these changes with interconnected implications for food and agricultural systems because population growth, urbanization and food demand are closely linked.
2. *Economic growth, structural transformation and macro-economic stability* are not always delivering the expected results in terms of inclusive economic transformation of societies. In selected African countries people that leave rural areas fail to find decently remunerated jobs in urban areas.
3. *Cross-country interdependencies* tie together food and agricultural systems globally but LIFDC, SISDS, landlocked countries heavily depend on imports for their food needs. Other countries depend on few export commodities to import technology, energy, financial services or health care equipment while illicit financial flows draw resources from low-income towards high-income countries⁵⁹.
4. *Big data generation, control, use and ownership* enable real-time innovative decision-making, also in agriculture. However, countries increasingly depend on few oligopolistic corporations that through big-data platforms globally accumulate huge amounts of information on production and consumption.⁶⁰
5. *Geopolitical instability and increasing conflicts*, including resource- and energy-based ones, are a major driver of food insecurity and malnutrition. They disrupt access to food and basic services and undermine social protection systems. Military expenses are often a large part of public budgets.
6. *Uncertainties*. All the drivers affecting food and agricultural systems are subject to uncertainties that materialize in sudden occurrences of events, such as the outbreak of COVID-19. Uncertainties, including ‘*unknown unknowns*’ and their impacts on food and agricultural systems by definition are difficult to predict and measure, but preparedness may reduce their impacts.

b) Drivers directly affecting food access and livelihoods:

7. *Rural and urban poverty*. High proportion of rural people live in poverty or extreme poverty. Agricultural wages are lower than in the other sectors but COVID-19 has squeezed incomes both in urban and rural areas. Overall, the number of food insecure is increasing, malnourishment is widespread and there are significant risks for the most vulnerable to fall in poverty⁶¹.
8. *Inequalities*. Societies are characterized by high income inequality, disparities in job opportunities, access to assets, basic services and inequitable fiscal burden. Women and indigenous groups suffer the most. The COVID-19 outbreak exacerbates inequalities, due to *inter alia*, increased exposure risks of the most vulnerable, job losses and imbalanced access to healthcare services.
9. *Food and agricultural prices* are significantly higher now than twenty years ago⁶², despite the fact that they fail to capture the full social and environmental costs of food. Cheap but unhealthy diets are not the solution anymore, however incomes are often too low for people to afford healthy and sustainable diets and tradeoffs may arise.

c) Drivers directly affecting food and agricultural production and distribution processes:

10. *Technologies currently applied* in food and agricultural systems are inefficient because they degrade natural resources. Technical progress including on ‘systemic’ technologies (e.g. agroecology, conservation, organic agriculture, indigenous food systems etc.), digitalization, biotechnologies and other innovative approaches raise opportunities. Research is ongoing on their development, limits and potential drawbacks.

⁵⁹ See SDG 16 and related SDG 16.4 target.

⁶⁰ UN, 2020. Population, food security nutrition and sustainable development. CPD. [Report of the UN Secretary General](#). UN 2019. Chiefs Executives Board for Coordination (UN CEB), Report [issued on 29 May 2019](#).

⁶¹ FAO et al. 2020. [The state of food security and nutrition](#) in the world, 2020.

⁶² FAO, 2020. FAO food price index in nominal and real terms. [FAO web site](#), visited on 22 July 2020

11. *Public investment in food and agricultural systems* is channelled away from agriculture. In many instances, priorities set by governments, particularly those of low-income countries, LIFDC, SISDS, and landlocked ones are not implemented due to insufficient public investment.

12. *Capital/information intensity of production processes* is increasing due to mechanization and digitalization of production, including in food and agriculture. This raises concerns and possible trade-offs for job creation, both in rural and urban areas. If employment is not generated poverty may significantly increase.

13. *Concentration of food and agricultural input and output markets* represents a challenge for the resilience and equitability of food and agricultural systems. A few companies control seeds, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, machinery, fertilizers, livestock genetics, food processing and commodity trading.

d) Drivers regarding environmental systems:

14. *Scarcity and degradation of natural resources.* Land, water, biodiversity are progressively degrading. Water scarcity, land degradation, large deforestation, overexploitation of marine resources and pasture, pollution at all levels raise serious concerns.

15. *Epidemics and pandemics*, beyond COVID-19, may increase in the future due to rising trends in transboundary plant pests and diseases, agriculture encroaching in wild areas, antimicrobial resistance and the increasing production and consumption of animal products.

16. *Climate change, due to agricultural and economy-wide GHG emissions*, is already affecting food systems and natural resources and is expected to accelerate hunger and poverty in rural areas. However, globally, prevailing development paradigms are still based on fossil fuels and huge GHG emissions. In the current development paradigm trade-offs may arise between growth and emissions.

17. *The ‘Blue Economy’*, that is, the development of economic activities related to oceans is increasing globally. Large projects such as oil/gas and shipping/ports might negatively impact ocean biodiversity, fisheries and, as a consequence, all the food systems. Arising trade-offs require sound policy making.

67. The future unfolding of these trends raises challenges to the overall sustainability of food and agricultural systems and make the achievement of the SDG’s and Agenda 2030 more difficult, but raise also opportunities for the transformation of food and agricultural systems, such as the increasing consumers’ awareness regarding the social and environmental implications of consuming certain foods, awareness of nutritious and healthy diets, emergence of new technologies, increasing awareness of inequalities and the need of stronger institutions and governance at all levels. These challenges and main transformative development processes outlined by the *Foresight exercise* will be further analyzed with the contribution of Technical Divisions to inform the development of the forthcoming Strategic Framework. In addition, the findings of the Corporate Strategic Foresight Exercise will be consolidated into a corporate flagship report in the series “*The future of food and agriculture*”⁶³, analysing the medium- to long-term trends and challenges the world is facing and is expected to face in areas of key importance to FAO’s vision and mandate.

68. These main trends will continue to be impacted by the unfolding events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic that FAO is addressing in its COVID-19 comprehensive Response and Recovery Programme⁶⁴. The economic shock caused by the pandemic itself and the collateral damage due to lockdown and economic contraction is putting especially the food supply chains in low and middle income countries at risk. In line with the UN approach to “build back better”, the Programme aims to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while strengthening the long-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods.⁶⁵ Actions focus on: i) Tracking and sharing policy-relevant information on measures adopted by countries through the FAO Food and Agriculture Policy analysis

⁶³ <http://www.fao.org/publications/fofa/en/>

⁶⁴ <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1297986/icode/>

⁶⁵ <http://www.fao.org/partnerships/resource-partners/covid-19/en/>

tool (FAPDA⁶⁶) and policy recommendations through specific COVID-related policy briefs⁶⁷ ii) supporting low-income countries to anticipate and mitigate the pandemic's impacts on food security and livelihoods especially on women and the most vulnerable and at risk groups; iii) contributing to the mitigation of the impacts of COVID-19 on global food trade and markets; and iv) supporting risk assessment, surveillance and capacity building in order to facilitate the early detection of disease emergency and contain disease spread.

IV. Priority areas of FAO's work in food and agriculture in 2020-21 and beyond

69. The priority areas for FAO's work in food and agriculture, are derived from the trends and developments described in Section III and contribute to the achievement of FAO's Strategic Objectives as central to delivering the overarching SDGs. FAO addresses these priorities through its core functions – norms and standard setting, data and information, policy dialogue, capacity development, knowledge and technologies, partnerships, and advocacy and communication.

70. The transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda, its complexity, and the need for more integrated and comprehensive, cross-sectoral and systemic approaches require new tools and new governance mechanisms that will have profound implications on the way countries plan, implement and monitor their food and agriculture, food security and nutrition programmes. It has increased awareness of the key role that food systems transformation can play as an entry point for accelerating progress towards the achievement of the SDGs⁶⁸. Recognizing the interconnectedness of the SDGs and promoting international commitments to realize the 2030 Agenda also requires that countries achieve this while creating *inter alia* inclusive growth and equitable decent employment opportunities needed to eradicate poverty, address socio-economic inequalities, sustain biodiversity and the natural resource environment, and mitigate the growing pressures of climate change.

71. Cross-cutting issues identified in the MTP-PWB such as climate change, gender equality, nutrition and governance are well reflected throughout FAO's work and the Organization continues to strengthen mainstreaming these areas across its programmes. FAO supports countries in closing the gender gaps that persist in access to productive resources, services and economic opportunities, as well as decision making power. The 2030 Agenda calls for further strengthening of attention to gender equality issues. Nutrition is currently mainstreamed through nutrition sensitive agriculture and a new Vision and Strategy for FAO's work on Nutrition has been developed, for review by the Committee⁶⁹

72. FAO continues to implement its strategy on climate change⁷⁰ and to work on emergency and resilience by responding to most immediate needs of countries affected by disasters, crises and conflicts, including protracted crises, as well as addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities and risks threatening their agriculture and food systems. FAO, together with 13 UN agencies contributed to the development of the UN Common Guidance on Resilience.⁷¹

73. Data, information and statistics are integrated in FAO's programmes, particularly to improve countries' capacities to formulate evidence-based policies and monitoring their impact. Monitoring and reporting on food insecurity and malnutrition, climate change, as well as on agriculture and rural development requires reliable and timely data that is systematically disaggregated by gender, age and other key socio-economic variables.

⁶⁶ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/fapda/fapda-home/en/>

⁶⁷ <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/resources/policy-briefs-test/en>

⁶⁸ Global Sustainable Development Report. 2019. The Future is Now: Science for achieving Sustainable Development. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

⁶⁹ Draft Vision and Strategy for FAO's work on Nutrition (COAG/2020/23)

⁷⁰ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7175e.pdf>

⁷¹ 2020 Draft UN Common Guidance on Resilience (being finalized)

74. Digitalization will play an increasingly important role in contributing towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Digital technologies can make agriculture more productive and sustainable and help meet the challenges of ensuring food security for all, improving rural livelihoods and managing natural resources sustainably. Although the opportunities offered by digital technologies are vast and profoundly transformative, there are also underlying risks.

75. At the request of the 2020 Berlin Agriculture Ministers Conference in the context of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, the FAO Council, during its 164th Session (July 2020), endorsed the proposal for hosting of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture by FAO and requested that its Terms of Reference are reviewed by COAG, COFI, COFO, the Programme Committee and the FAO Council⁷². This voluntary initiative will form a multi-stakeholder forum including Members, farmers' organizations, the private sector, and the civil and knowledge societies to identify and discuss the potential benefits and risks of digital technology applications on food and agriculture. Providing support to policymakers with evidence-based recommendations and best practices will be central in promoting the digitalization of food and agriculture and addressing the technical, social, and ethical challenges food and agriculture is facing in the context of digital technologies.

76. Under this overall framework, COAG 27 discussion documents address various emerging issues and priorities, with a particular focus on the theme of COAG 27 'Sustainable Livestock for achieving the SDGs' and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and nutrition. Several COAG 27 agenda items discuss the major trends and challenges and provide substantive input towards the priority areas of work for the Committee's considerations, such as assessing and improving the contribution of livestock to food security and nutrition and healthy diets, enhancing productivity of small-scale livestock keepers, developing knowledge and tools to guide countries' livestock policies and investments, developing solutions to reduce livestock's negative environmental impacts, and mainstreaming pastoralism and rangelands in FAO's work. In particular a proposal for the establishment of a COAG Sub-Committee on Livestock was submitted as requested by the 26th Session of COAG and acknowledged by the 164th Session of the Council. If approved, this Sub-Committee will monitor and report to COAG on these and other livestock-related issues and priority areas of work.

77. FAO priority areas of action can be summarized under four closely interrelated and overarching themes, which will be reviewed at COAG 27: (A) Achieving sustainable food systems, encompassing sustainable food and agriculture with a focus on sustainable livestock, the Urban Food Agenda, FAO's updated strategy on food safety, the Vision and Strategy for FAO's work on Nutrition, addressing Food Loss and Waste and other key areas; and enabling small holders and family farmers access to innovation (B) Climate and Natural Resources (biodiversity, land and water) and addressing multiple crisis risks and environmental challenges: Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, Climate Change and Natural Resources; (C) addressing pests and disease threats to plant, animal and human health through the One Health approach, in particular the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and agriculture, locusts and the threat of zoonotic diseases; and (D) Revitalizing rural areas for youth.

A. Achieving resilient sustainable food systems for food security and nutrition for all⁷³

78. Food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries, and the broader economic, societal and natural resource environments in which they are embedded (FAO, 2018)⁷⁴. A food system is resilient if it can anticipate, prevent, adapt, absorb and transform in the face of shocks and stresses, and is sustainable if it can provide food security and nutrition in such a way that the

⁷²Council report CL 164/Rep (para. 21 k) <http://www.fao.org/3/nb990en/nb990en.pdf>

⁷³ COAG 27 Agenda items 1.1, 1.3,1.4, 1.6,.1.7, 1.8,1.9, 1.11

⁷⁴ FAO. 2018 Sustainable food systems: concept and framework. www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf

economic, social and environmental bases required for generating food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.

79. The complexity of food systems and the difficult trade-offs that countries will face during their transformation creates significant challenges. FAO is well placed to support processes of food system transformation as a global intergovernmental organization, its recognition as an honest broker and as an unparalleled source of information across all aspects of the food system. Through its core functions, FAO can ensure coherence in action at and between the global, national and local levels of food system governance. The 164th Session of the Council approved the creation of a new division on Food Systems and Food Safety to provide strategic leadership for the Organization's support to Members in the development of more sustainable food systems. Working in close coordination with other technical units and decentralized offices, the Division will be tasked with integrating FAO's scientific and economic analysis to provide improved policy guidance and targeted investment in food systems.

80. There has been a growing demand for FAO to better integrate its long-standing support to the development of agricultural and food systems. FAO is playing a lead role in the definition of approaches to food systems transformation and in advocating, at the highest level, for greater attention to the way in which interventions in food systems are designed and implemented. Increasingly, new FAO strategies and initiatives are informed by and supportive of the transformation to more sustainable food systems, including through enhanced trade and agribusiness; increased levels and quality of investment; urban food systems development; youth employment through sustainable value chain development; food loss and waste reduction; and using a One-Health approach to address transboundary animal pests and diseases and the growing threat of AMR.

81. Healthy diets and nutrition remain FAO's key priorities supporting food systems to strengthen local, country and regional capacities. FAO has developed a brief on the sustainable food systems concept and framework, developed a vision and strategy for FAO's work on food security and nutrition. The approach aims to leave no one behind, focusing on empowering rural women and youth. Further, FAO promotes Indigenous food systems and is launching the Global-Hub on indigenous food systems which will be a platform gathering universities, research centers, academia, indigenous organizations, and other interested actors working to enhance the learning from the preservation and the promotion of indigenous peoples' food systems in policy discussions.

82. The UN Food Systems Summit to be convened by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2021 provides a major opportunity for FAO to project what it is doing, increase the visibility of, and deliver on, its leadership role in achieving the overarching goal of the Summit – to help stakeholders to better understand and manage the complex choices that affect the future of food systems. FAO is actively involved in the design of an inclusive preparatory process to inform the Summit, and which will be supported by robust and independent evidence to work through the complex linked, or nexus, challenges that must be addressed if more sustainable food systems are to be achieved. The United Nations Secretary-General has put in place a governance structure, including a Summit Secretariat, the technical branch of which will be hosted at FAO, to support the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit, who will provide leadership, guidance and strategic direction of the Summit.

83. FAO will continue its work for the Global Network Against Food Crises; an alliance of humanitarian, development and peace actors united by the commitment to tackle the root causes of food crises and promote sustainable solutions through shared analysis and knowledge, strengthened coordination in evidence-based responses and collective efforts across the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus⁷⁵.

⁷⁵ <http://www.fightfoodcrises.net/>

B. Addressing multiple crisis risks and environmental challenges: Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, Climate Change and Natural Resources⁷⁶

a. Mainstream disaster risk reduction (DRR) and management, and climate change in agriculture and food sectors

84. The food and agricultural sectors are essential for human development and are at the centre of the global response to climate change. Agricultural and food systems are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and its extreme and slow onset events. At the same time, they are significant sources of GHG emissions, but offer significant climate solutions through storing carbon in soil and in trees for example and to their resilience with mitigation and adaptation co-benefits. FAO's climate change strategy considers gender-specific vulnerabilities and needs along with opportunities and capabilities with regard to climate change, as very often women are more exposed to climate risks compared with men. FAO supports the gender action plans of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (UNFCCC, UNCCD and CBD) and financial mechanisms (GEF, GCF). By supporting the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement and Koronivia Joint work on Agriculture and UNCCD, FAO will continue to help countries deliver on DRR, climate, land degradation and desertification goals. The climate-smart agriculture approach supports the adaptation of agro-ecological practices to the socio-economic context and addresses women's specific constraints.

85. FAO has presented the report on the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy under the PIR for 2018-2019. While a full refurbishment of the Strategy, its Action and Results Framework is not foreseen under the current biennium, its reporting indicators and Action Plan will be updated to be coherent and in line with the future Strategic Framework, as well as the recommendations of the ongoing FAO's evaluation on SDG13 that is also evaluating the Strategy and FAO's activities.

86. Agroecology will be an important approach to help both mitigate and adapt to climate change, building resilience through increased adaptive capacity and reduced vulnerability in agroecosystems, by strengthening soil health, biodiversity and overall diversity i.e. integrating different breeds, varieties and species in the systems while maintaining productivity and yield stability. Mitigation co-benefits are also achieved, mainly related to increased soil organic matter and reduced need for use of synthetic fertilizers.

b. Mainstream biodiversity across agricultural and food sectors

87. The Council adopted in 2019 the Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors⁷⁷. The draft Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy is presented to the Committee⁷⁸ for review, as requested by the 164th Session of the Council⁷⁹. Agricultural sectors are major users of biodiversity but also have the potential to contribute to the protection of biodiversity. Sustainable agriculture is the answer to reverse trends that lead to biodiversity loss, damaged ecosystems, deforestation and the overall deterioration of our natural resources. If terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems are managed sustainably, agricultural sectors can contribute to the provisioning of ecosystem services. These include maintenance of water quality and quantity, nutrient cycling, soil formation and rehabilitation, erosion control, carbon sequestration, improving resilience of ecosystems, habitat provision for wild species and natural enemies, biological pest control, pollination and pesticide risk reduction. By supporting the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including the International Pollinator Initiative, FAO helps countries deliver

⁷⁶ COAG 27 Agenda items 2.1, 2.2,2.3

⁷⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7722en/ca7722en.pdf>

⁷⁸ Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors (COAG/2020/16)

⁷⁹ CL 164/Rep, para 18(1).

on both biodiversity goals, resilient production systems and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

88. Sustainable soil management is at the heart of several global agendas and international policy frameworks, and soil biodiversity and ecosystem services will be a key element for the success of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. FAO leads the implementation of the International Initiative for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity under the framework of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP). COP Decision 14/30 invited FAO, to consider the preparation of a report on the state of knowledge on soil biodiversity covering current status, challenges and potentialities. The GSP Secretariat, together with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) members, prepared the report “State of knowledge of soil biodiversity – Status, challenges and potentialities” which will be launched during the World Soil Day 2020. The COP also requested a review of the implementation of the International Initiative for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity. FAO and the GSP supported the CBD Secretariat in the review of the Initiative and in the preparation of a new plan of action and strategies to improve the implementation of the Initiative,

C. Addressing emerging threats to plant, animal and human health⁸⁰

89. The emergence and spread of transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases and food safety threats has increased dramatically in recent years. Globalization, urbanization, changing ecosystems, agricultural intensification and trade, as well as climate change, have all played a part. Climate change, and human activities, have altered ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and creating new niches where pests can thrive. At the same time, international travel and trade has tripled in volume in the last decade and can quickly spread pests and diseases around the world causing great damage to native plants and the environment. These threats have the ability to rapidly spread over large geographical areas and reach epidemic proportions with devastating impacts not only on livelihoods and food security and nutrition of populations, but also on public health especially when such diseases and pests affect humans. Strengthening the capacities of countries and regions to address the challenges of these threats in a more effective manner is a top priority of FAO, addressed by its Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES) Programmes; Food Chain Crisis Management framework, the IPPC and other major initiatives and programmes.

90. FAO will continue to support the progressive elimination of high impact transboundary animal diseases through technical and policy support to Members for developing national plans for progressive control and elimination of transboundary animal diseases of relevance such as FMD and PPR, under the umbrella of the GF-TADs, thereby supporting the sustainable development of the livestock and small ruminant sector. FAO will work with country partners to develop legal and policy frameworks, strengthen national surveillance and diagnostic capacities, and support emergency response and preparedness to strengthen the resilience of food systems to crises.

91. Within the GF-TADs initiative for the Global control of ASF (2020-2025), FAO will support national and regional mechanisms to improve the capability of countries to control ASF, improve coordination and cooperation of key stakeholders from the private and public sector, and minimise the consequences of ASF. In particular, it aims to address the spread of ASF in Asia, with devastating impacts on livelihoods, food security and nutrition.

92. Climate change and globalization have expanded the geographic range of several transboundary animal vector borne diseases (VBD), the most recent of which is exemplified by the spread of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) northwards and eastwards from its historical niche in Africa, into Europe and most recently, introduction in Asia. FAO will work with countries and regional organizations to assess the risk of spread of VBD, strengthen capacities for early detection and containment, and support in contingency planning to minimize the impact on food security and livelihoods. FAO’s work at the interface of animal health and climate change will focus on strengthening and expanding global and national platforms, infrastructures and tools to prevent,

⁸⁰ COAG 27 Agenda items 1.2, 1.5

prepare and respond to animal health-related emergencies triggered by climate change. This work will be supported by research to enhance the ability to forecast future animal health threats caused or exacerbated by climate change.

93. FAO and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), will continue to support countries in developing the capacity to monitor and respond to plant pest risks and safeguard their food supply and will continue its work for securing cooperation among nations in protecting global plant resources from the spread and introduction of pests of plants, to ensure basic human needs and the demand for a safe and secure food supply, a protected environment, sustainable trade and economic growth.

94. Since January 2020, the desert locust upsurge has evolved. FAO is sustaining operations in the Greater Horn of Africa and Yemen, scaling up support in Southwest Asia, specifically in Iran and Pakistan and preparing for any outbreak in West Africa and the Sahel. Efforts must be expanded to tackle the threat posed by desert locust – the world’s most devastating migratory pest. Since the beginning of 2020, countries across East Africa have endured the worst desert locust infestations in decades. With the upsurge spilling over into other parts of Africa and Asia, time is of essence. Scaled-up support is needed immediately to avoid further spread, and anticipatory action must be put in place to protect the livelihoods of farmers and livestock holders.

95. In the last decades, the epidemiology of foodborne diseases have changed with new or unexpected pathogens often emerging on a countrywide or worldwide scale, including the recent COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with African Union Commission (AUC), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and other development partners, FAO carries out a range of activities that contribute to the promotion of Food Safety. These include strengthening national food control systems in Members and supporting their participation in the work of the International Standard Setting bodies.

96. FAO is hosting the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the pre-eminent food safety standard-setting organization protecting human health and ensuring fair practices in the trade of food globally. To strengthen the international coordination and commitment for safer food for all, FAO will be collaborating closely with the African Union Commission through the operationalization of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Africa Food Safety Agency (AFSA).

97. FAO will continue making extensive use of the FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tools to enable countries to develop evidence-based analyses of the performance of national food control systems. The FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund (CTF) provides support to strengthen national Codex Alimentarius structures. Climate change can give rise to new threats to food safety and evolving food production systems can also change patterns of contamination. To mitigate the potential negative impact on public health and trade from those emerging food safety challenges, FAO supports and builds capacities in affected countries to help them prepare and manage these new threats as they emerge.

D. Revitalizing agriculture and food based livelihoods areas for youth

98. There are currently 40 million new entrants to the labour market every year. In many low- and middle-income countries, population growth is outpacing job growth and rapid urbanization has not been accompanied by commensurate non-agricultural job growth. Considering agriculture as an essential driver of economic development and an area of great opportunities for young people in Africa, harnessing opportunities in rural and territorial development, agribusiness entrepreneurship and innovations, including in ICT innovations, along the value chains, contributes to improving the sector’s image, increases productivity and returns to investment and provides new employment opportunities, hence attracting more young people.

99. To support this and also with the purpose of revitalizing rural areas, at the COAG’s request, FAO has developed a Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP) with the specific aim of contributing to the

realization of the SDGs by equally empowering rural young women and men, protecting children and other excluded youth groups, revitalizing rural areas through on-farm and off-farm activities and leaving no one behind. This will be achieved through improved policy guidance, supporting governments and other stakeholders and targeting of FAO's normative and field programmes on youth-related issues, with a view to strengthen youth participation in decision-making processes and access to education, decent employment, markets, advisory services and rural finance. The RYAP aims also at promoting empowerment and youth leadership, as well as facilitating youth engagement in decision-making processes, especially for marginalized and disadvantaged youth, youth in remote areas and those with limited access to the internet and other communication channels. FAO will collaborate with other UN agencies and relevant partners at global, regional and country levels to strengthen and create a coherent design of youth-centric and gender-sensitive processes.

100. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of local food systems. In order to ensure food security and nutrition in such a crisis, the capacity to provide nutritious food, especially fresh foods at local or territorial level is key. Rural women are disproportionately affected in a number of ways, including, but not limited to food security and nutrition, time poverty, access to health facilities, services and economic opportunities, and gender-based violence. FAO is supporting countries in exploring the socio-economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on food systems and rural economies, and mitigating the impacts of the pandemic on rural women and girls by designing policy measures in the COVID-19 response and recovery plans that address the specific needs of rural women and men.