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# COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

## Twenty-third Session

Rome, 21 - 25 May 2012

### Sustainable Crop Production Intensification

#### Executive Summary

Facing the projected need for a significant increase in food production to feed 9.1 billion people in 2050 under the growing pressures of climate change and degraded natural resources, the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) supported the FAO Strategy for Sustainable Crop Production Intensification (SCPI) through an ecosystem approach and an enabling environment<sup>1</sup> and made a number of recommendations with respect to its implementation<sup>2</sup>. Strategic Objective A is the main mechanism for the delivery of the Strategy on SCPI, however there are important linkages to other Strategic Objectives on livestock (under SO B), food and nutrition security (under SO H), nutrition and sustainable diets (under SO F) and natural resource management (under SO F), as well as with specific initiatives under SO's C, G, I and L. The four Organizational Results (ORs) under SO A correspond to the priority areas endorsed by COAG, while the majority of the priorities identified by the Regional Conferences in 2010 correspond to one or more of these ORs.

A key element of the Strategy on SCPI presented to the COAG in 2010 was a proposed programme for activities until 2025. The programme focused on evaluation, adaptation and promotion of integrated production systems including crop-livestock systems and crop-aquaculture systems. The Strategy recognized that progress on SCPI requires complementary action from the farm level through the consumer and at economic and policy levels. The COAG advised that FAO support to SCPI should be seen in the context of the overall food chain, and that various thematic areas such as post harvest management, food consumption, human nutrition and sustainable diets should be tackled concurrently with work on SCPI.

This paper reports on progress in the implementation of the Strategy on SCPI in 2010-2011 and on complementary work being done on food chains and sustainable diets. It proposes a revised title for the Strategy and sets out major activities in a programme for 2012-2015.

<sup>1</sup> COAG/2010/3

<sup>2</sup> CL 140/3 paragraphs 7 and 8

**Suggested action by the Committee:**

The Committee is invited to take note of actions taken by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Strategy on SCPI. In particular the Committee may wish to:

- i) recognize the progress made in the implementation of the Strategy on SCPI supported at its 22<sup>nd</sup> Session;
- ii) recommend that FAO member countries incorporate the Save and Grow approach to sustainable production in their agricultural development strategies;
- iii) endorse the topics for integrated work as defined for 2012-2015 and bring this to the attention of key development partners;
- iv) note the emphasis on the need for a broad range of partnerships involving the public and private sectors;
- v) reaffirm support for the Strategy with the revised title of **Sustainable Production Intensification (SPI)**.

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

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## I. Introduction

1. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) supported an *FAO Strategy for Sustainable Crop Production Intensification (SCPI) based on an ecosystem approach and an enabling environment*<sup>3</sup>. The essence of the Strategy is to encourage the adoption of sustainable intensification practices for crop production which take advantage of natural ecosystem processes. This means harnessing soil fertility, pollination services, natural pest and disease regulation, and environmentally friendly agronomic practices to increase efficiencies and build resilience in agricultural production systems. Knowledge management and capacity development are central to the success of SCPI.
2. More sustainable practices often involve some form of “win-win” situation. Increasing the efficiency of resource use (including external inputs) reduces costs to farmers. It can also protect and enhance local agroecosystems and safeguard biodiversity by preventing damage arising from overuse of inputs or overexploitation of resources. More sustainable farming practices can result in economic, social as well as environmental benefits. Investing in sustainable farming practices should go hand in hand with comprehensive employment and social policies for more integrated approaches to rural development. For example, closing the gender gap in agriculture could sustainably increase total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent<sup>4</sup>.
3. The Strategy on SCPI was accompanied by a proposed implementation programme for the period 2010-2025, covering different food production systems including crop-livestock and crop-fish production systems. The proposed programme presents activities for achieving sustainable crop production intensification and complementary actions needed to gain efficiencies throughout the food chain. It was anticipated that reporting on the programme would cover progress made on the intensification of production systems as well as periodic reporting on selected thematic issues on different aspects of the food chain.
4. In supporting the Strategy on SCPI, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of COAG made a number of recommendations with respect to its implementation<sup>5</sup> including: that crop production should be seen in the context of the overall food chain; the need for a broad range of partnerships; that work on thematic areas such as post-harvest, access to food and gender should be tackled concurrently; the importance of smallholders and of linking policy and field-based activities; the need for capacity building; the promotion of cooperatives among smallholders; and the importance of biodiversity and genetic resources and their link to climate change.
5. The 36<sup>th</sup> FAO Conference endorsed the Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2010-2013 including its Strategic Framework. Strategic Objective A - Sustainable Intensification of Crop Production (SO A) is the main mechanism for the delivery of the strategy on SCPI. The 37<sup>th</sup> FAO Conference approved a Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) for 2012-2013 that takes into account inputs and recommendations from Regional Conferences, Technical Committees of the Council and other Governing Bodies on priorities. The PWB 2012-2013 strengthened linkages between crop and livestock, greater integration with food and nutrition security through sustainable diets, natural resource management and climate change.
6. The purpose of this paper is to: i) report on progress towards implementation of the Strategy on SCPI in 2010-2011 and linking SCPI with complementary work on food chains, food losses and waste and sustainable diets; ii) set out key elements of a programme for 2012-2015 focused on integrated holistic approaches to developing sustainable production systems with complementary actions throughout the food chain; iii) seek the advice of the Committee on a revised title to better reflect the scope of the Strategy and iv) recommend that FAO member countries incorporate the Save and Grow approach to sustainable production in their agricultural development strategies.

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<sup>3</sup> COAG/2010/3

<sup>4</sup> SOFA 2010-2011

<sup>5</sup> CL 140/3 paragraphs 7 and 8

## II. Progress on implementing the Strategy on SCPI in 2010-11

7. In 2010-2011, efforts focused on working with countries to test and integrate approaches to crop production, in particular conservation agriculture, seed systems, integrated production and pesticide management and integrated plant nutrition management. These were undertaken from the perspective of enhancing ecosystem services, finding efficiency gains through good practices and minimizing risks.

8. Detailed information on progress in the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework in 2010 was made available to the Programme and Finance Committees in March 2011<sup>6</sup>. Further reports (End of Biennium Assessment and Programme Implementation Report<sup>7</sup>) will be available to Governing Bodies this year.

9. This section highlights some of the key achievements in 2010-2011.

### a) Save and Grow

10. Initial work focused on identifying and documenting sustainable practices as the basis for a common platform for addressing sustainable intensification issues. One result of this work was the launch in June 2011 of *Save and Grow - a policy makers guide to the sustainable intensification of smallholder crop production*.

11. This keynote publication was developed with input from a technical advisory group of 24 external experts, as well as from FAO staff across all technical departments. *Save and Grow* describes approaches capable of delivering more sustainable agriculture, with a shift from current farming practices towards sustainable agricultural systems that make more efficient use of inputs, and are capable of providing both productivity increases and enhanced ecosystem services. It covers management practices and technologies and the policies needed to implement them at a range of scales.

12. The Save and Grow approach "amounts to a manifesto for a greener revolution of agriculture, which can increase production without any of the environmental damage and massive depletion of natural resources, caused by present farm systems. This new model conserves and enhances natural resources, drawing upon nature's contribution to crop growth -- from soil organic matter to water flow regulation -- and can be adapted to specific conditions and locations."<sup>8</sup>

### b) Progress in sustainable crop production intensification (SCPI) in 2010-2011

13. In 2010-2011 the programme focused on crop production and continued developing, field-testing and adapting specific practices that enhance ecosystem services in crop production systems. This work was often undertaken in partnership with international and national agricultural research networks. Efforts focused on further evaluating and integrating approaches to crop production from the perspective of productivity, resource efficiency gains and risks. In particular, following the recommendations by the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of COAG<sup>9</sup> achievements were made with respect to the following:

- i) **Integrated holistic approaches:** FAO's work increasingly integrates agricultural practices and approaches such as Conservation Agriculture (CA), sustainable agricultural mechanization, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Integrated Plant Nutrient Management (IPNM), pollination and weeds management, grasslands and integrated crop/livestock systems, on-farm water management, agro-forestry, crop/fish systems, crop diversification and sustainable livelihoods. Complementarities and synergies amongst these continue to be explored, incorporating social, economic and ecological dimensions of sustainable food

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<sup>6</sup> Mid-term review synthesis report PC 106/7 - FC 138/6 and CL 141/8 paragraph 21

<sup>7</sup> C 2013/8

<sup>8</sup> José Graziano da Silva, "Hunger Can't Wait", 5/1/2012 (Huffington Post)

<sup>9</sup> CL 140/3 paragraphs 7 and 8

- production. Climate change is addressed as an element of risk/vulnerability for sustainable production and incorporated at both policy and field levels.
- ii) ***Capacity building for increasing benefits to producers and enhancing the role of smallholders:*** Capacity development both at the farmer and institutional levels is essential to implement SCPI in response to local conditions. FAO's work through farmer field schools continues in South East Asia, across North and sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, on a wide range of technical areas (including IPM, soil health, weeds, water and nutrient management, livestock, livelihoods and human health, emergencies and rehabilitation). A key element of this work is developing the understanding and management of ecosystem services (for example natural predation in order to regulate insect pests, and to reduce reliance on chemical pesticides).
  - iii) ***A broad range of partnerships:*** To develop appropriate responses to new issues, partnerships are being strengthened at global, national and local levels, from field to policy levels, involving local communities, institutions, research and extension, and international agencies. For example, in the case of transboundary pests and diseases, work across Africa and Central Asia shows how cross-border partnerships support the intensification of production by reducing yield losses. This involves monitoring and developing packages of control measures which support ecosystem services including the use of biopesticides in locust control, improved farmer field hygiene to tackle bacterial diseases of banana, and managing fruit flies. Wherever possible, work also involves pest and disease prevention strategies (including early warning and reaction to prevent outbreaks of invasive pests or to manage migratory pests) together with the development of contingency plans.
  - iv) ***Biodiversity, genetic resources and climate change:*** FAO's work recognizes the centrality of biodiversity and genetic resources to increasing resilience, through work on seed systems and the sustainable conservation and use of genetic resources for food and agriculture. In response to *The Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, prepared on the basis of country reports and launched by FAO in 2010, FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources negotiated and agreed on the *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, which the Council adopted in November 2011 as the renewed global framework for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources<sup>10</sup>. The aim is to secure agricultural biodiversity which can play a vital role in poverty alleviation, food security and resilience to climate change, through management practices that enhance biodiversity.

### c) Progress on food chain and consumption issues complementary to SCPI in 2010-2011

14. ***Market linkages and value chains:*** Support was provided to national and regional farmer organizations to strengthen farmer-market linkages and improve the competitiveness of value chains involving smallholders. Field appraisals were carried out to identify business models that improve farmers' access to services, technical assistance and fair prices and reinforce the capacity of these organizations to provide market-oriented services to Members that can strengthen small farmers' participation in value chains and their transition to appropriate production technologies. Access of farmers to essential inputs is being addressed in cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development through an appraisal of private-sector or private-public partnership-driven innovation in input supply chains.

15. ***Reducing food losses and wastes:*** A review was carried out on food losses and wastes, leading to a publication *Global Food Losses and Food Waste: Extent, Causes and Prevention* in support of the Interpack Congress - Save Food in 2011. The publication helped gain recognition that new strategies and approaches are needed, taking into account losses along food chains, waste at the level of retail and consumption, global market integration and the associated 'lengthening' of food

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<sup>10</sup> CGRFA-13/11/Report and COAG/2012/INF/15

chains. FAO and its partners have re-aligned their intervention strategies to focus on systemic improvements of the efficiency and sustainability of food chains<sup>11</sup>.

16. **Sustainable diets<sup>12</sup> and nutrition:** The sustainable diets' approach promotes the use of local food biodiversity as appropriate, including traditional species and varieties/breeds, as sustainable sources of quality nutrition. Sustainable diets necessarily address the entire food chain, from crop and livestock production to consumption, acknowledging the interdependency of food production and consumption with energy requirements and nutrient recommendations. During 2010-2011 successful international meetings were held in Cameroon, Senegal and United Republic of Tanzania. There was a global initiative in horticulture in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and regional bodies such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), that focused on rural, urban and peri-urban horticulture, and on the relationship between production and nutritional outcomes.

### **III. Programme for 2012-15 – SCPI and complementary actions**

17. The original Strategy on SCPI foresaw progressively increasing integration of work on crop production with livestock and other sectors coupled with complementary actions throughout the food chain and on gender and nutrition. Experience in 2010-2011 has highlighted the importance of integrated holistic approaches to developing sustainable production systems. In this light and in line with the guidance of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of COAG, this integration will be accelerated in 2012-2013. It is further proposed that the title of the Strategy be broadened from *Sustainable Crop Production Intensification* to **Sustainable Production Intensification (SPI)**.

18. A priority for 2012-2013 will be to promote the use of the “Save and Grow” approach at community, country, sub-regional and regional levels. Further tools and guidance will be developed on enhancing ecosystem services in sustainable crop production, including pollination, pest, disease and weed management, water and soil fertility maintenance. Work to build enabling environments for farmer knowledge management, training and group formation through farmer field schools will also continue. There is a need to work with local partners to develop indicators, methods and field-based tools for the measurement of specific aspects of sustainability. These could include soil organic matter, soil fertility, nutrient and water use efficiency, on-farm land degradation and water quality, all of which give some indication of the sustainability of the production system.

19. In line with the PWB for 2012-2013, implementation of the Strategy will address the sustainable intensification of production in an integrated and cross-disciplinary manner with particular emphasis on the following topics:

- i) **Climate change and integrated production management:** A broad range of climate-smart agriculture projects are planned including at policy, institutional and community levels. One example is a programme in West Africa (together with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and local partners) to use farmer field school approaches to improve resilience to climate change in semi-humid savannah zones. In a first phase, the programme is targeting 30,000 farmers in Mali, with a similar scale of activities planned in four other countries. This is linked to conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources and the Benefit Sharing Fund of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which is being scaled up to help smallholder farmers in developing countries to conserve and use their plant genetic resources sustainably in order to increase production and adapt to the effects of climate change. Climate change can also have a significant impact on pest and disease distribution. Accurate monitoring and management of transboundary plant

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<sup>11</sup> Further information may be found in document COAG/2012/INF/9 - Status of FAO's Work on Post-Harvest-Losses.

<sup>12</sup> Sustainable diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources. (FAO 2010)

- pests and diseases and improvement in the preparedness to combat them as well as the use of resistant varieties also help to increase productivity.
- ii) ***Crop-Livestock integration:*** Integrated crop-livestock systems with a focus on smallholder farmers will be emphasized, while the concept of sustainable animal feeding/diets will be developed in response to concerns related to climate change, land and water shortages and loss of biodiversity. Examples of this work include exploring innovative options such as an increased use of novel agro-industrial by-products and other feed ingredients that do not compete with human food and that originate from plants capable of growing in marginal soils and harsh climates. The Global Agenda of Action in Support of Sustainable Livestock Sector Development and the Strategy on SCPI complement each other in improving natural resource use efficiency<sup>13</sup>. Increased efficiency in forage production through improving forage seed systems and diversification of cropping systems through a higher production of fodders, legumes, double purpose crops and agro-forestry, and a better use of biodiversity will be explored. Work is underway on nutrient flows, on plant-soil-livestock interfaces and on use of fertilizers both at the farm level and beyond in order to further increase the efficiency of crop-livestock systems. The development of guidelines to maintain soil health at farm level of crop-livestock systems is underway. The development of scenarios for the sustainable management of rangelands/grasslands has been initiated to add value to the multiple functions of these ecosystems in addition to livestock production.
  - iii) ***Maize and cassava in Africa:*** The Africa Results Task Force (made up of staff from the Regional Office for Africa, Sub-regional offices, UN Country Teams and FAO headquarters) has initiated a Programme which will focus on two of the six regional priorities<sup>14</sup> endorsed by the 26<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Conference (*Increase agricultural productivity and diversification; Promote sustainable natural resources management*) and contribute to a range of FAO's Strategic Objectives (e.g. SO's A, E, F, G, H, K and L). The initial Pilot phase will focus on a value chain approach for two commodities in four countries (Ghana and Democratic Republic of Congo for cassava; Angola and Uganda for maize). The topics have been selected according to FAO's comparative advantages and are consistent with the approaches laid out in Save and Grow. The goal is to see immediate outcomes in terms of contributing to the reduction of hunger and malnutrition in the region.
  - iv) ***Development of inclusive and green value chains***<sup>15</sup>: Based on the large amount of field experience in supporting and promoting market linkages and value chains, several practical handbooks will be prepared to provide best practice guidance. These handbooks will cover topics such as inputs supply systems, contracting, producer-buyer linkage models, and producer organization services. Two new value chain issues will receive focused attention. One is work recently launched on improved methods for assessing how value chains impact on the decisions and welfare of smallscale farmers. This work will help to clarify necessary conditions for more rapid adoption of SCPI integrated systems. The second is an appraisal covering the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions on approaches used to promote development of inclusive (*smallholder*) and green (*environmentally sound technologies*) value chains. Particular attention will be given to identifying the "enablers and incentives" needed by value chain actors for replication and scaling of sustainable value chains.
  - v) ***Reducing food losses and wastes:*** Technical work will focus on improved field practices, investment in local storage and primary processing, rural infrastructure and packaging technologies. Food loss reduction programmes will be promoted and supported with particular attention to Africa and Middle East and North Africa, and to small and medium enterprise development programmes. Two regional Save Food Congresses will be organized.

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<sup>13</sup> Further information may be found in document COAG/2012/4 - Options for Stakeholder Dialogue in Support of Sustainable Livestock Development

<sup>14</sup> ARC/10/REP/Rev.1 paragraphs 35-36

<sup>15</sup> Further information may be found in documents COAG/2012/INF/10 - African Agribusiness and Agro-industries Development Initiative and COAG/2012/INF/11 - Enhancing the Competitiveness of Small and Medium Agricultural Enterprises.

vi) ***Sustainable diets and nutrition:*** Work on sustainable diets is being developed at the global and country levels. A shift to more sustainable diets can trigger upstream effects on food production (e.g. diversification), processing chain and consumption patterns. Systems are needed that can flexibly manage the response to consumer demand. Activities will focus on sustainable diets in the context of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and the development of normative guidelines, tools and indicators to characterize and measure sustainable diets in different agro-ecological zones. Following the success of international meetings in Cameroon, Senegal and the United Republic of Tanzania, global initiatives in horticulture will continue, in partnership with WHO and regional bodies such as NEPAD, on rural, urban and peri-urban horticulture, and on the relationship between production and nutritional outcomes.

20. The programme for 2012-2015 is set out in Annex A. The precise timetable for implementing this work will depend on member country interest, commitment and funding. However, from funding currently available, it is possible to target the incorporation of the “Save and Grow” approach into programmes in five countries by the end of 2013. A second target would be to begin to see outcomes among this initial group (e.g. more sustainable intensification and diversification on the ground, in terms of the success indicators for each programme), by the end of 2015.

21. The entry point for the “Save and Grow” approach, in terms of production intensification and diversification will be determined by national and regional priorities as defined in the national Country Programme Frameworks, and the outputs of the FAO Regional Conferences.

22. Overall, the integration of sustainable production intensification into national policies and programmes needs to be facilitated and monitored. This includes sustainable intensification programmes where FAO and the other Rome-based agencies are directly involved, but also includes programmes funded from other sources. At the field level, collaboration with a broad range of partners including the private sector and civil society will also be sought.

23. Financing for FAO’s work on sustainable production intensification will come from three different sources: FAO assessed contribution; extrabudgetary funds through FAO (at regional, sub-regional or national level); and national (government own) funds. The aim is not for FAO to manage sustainable intensification programmes for countries, but to assist in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

24. In addition to the Regular Programme, two sources of external funds have so far been identified in the short term for sustainable production intensification:

- i) The EU has agreed to fund the further development and testing of guidelines on sustainable intensification and indicators, based on lessons learned from the work of FAO and the other Rome-based Agencies. Activities will cover the period 2012-2015. This work will support the design of programmes with partner countries, and aim to leverage off and strengthen existing field work.
- ii) The government of Switzerland has provided catalytic funding to support a task force on integrated work on sustainable consumption and food production in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme under the umbrella of the Multi Year Plan of Work on Sustainable Consumption and Production developed for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development ahead of the Rio+20 summit (June 2012).

#### **IV. Guidance sought from the Committee**

25. The Committee is invited to take note of actions taken by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Strategy on SCPI.

26. In particular the Committee may wish to:

- i) recognize the progress made in the implementation of the Strategy on SCPI supported at its 22<sup>nd</sup> Session;

- ii) recommend that FAO member countries incorporate the Save and Grow approach to sustainable production in their agricultural development strategies;
- iii) endorse the topics for integrated work as defined for 2012-2015 and bring this to the attention of key development partners;
- iv) note the emphasis on the need for a broad range of partnerships involving the public and private sectors;
- v) reaffirm support for the strategy with the revised title of Sustainable Production Intensification.

## **Annex A – Programme of Work for 2012-2015**

The overall programme for sustainable production intensification is based on integrated holistic approaches across production systems including crop-livestock, crop-fish production and agro-forestry systems through complementary actions at all stages of agricultural value chains, including post harvest management, processing and distribution and consumption (sustainable diets). The activities for 2012-2015 are focused on countries adopting sustainable production intensification programmes, recognizing that individual countries will identify and adapt those elements that most closely reflect their specific needs, priorities and capacities. In parallel with this, there is an ongoing process to refine the methods, guidelines and relevant training materials based on the lessons learned. The aim is that by 2025 a majority of countries will have developed sustainable production intensification programmes tailored to their needs.

<b>Sustainable Production Intensification through an Ecosystem Approach and an Enabling Environment</b>		
<b>Biennium</b>	<b>Major Activities</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>1- 2010-2011</b>	<p>(1) Document and demonstrate potential efficiency gains at local, national and regional levels on topics such as soil and water management, fertilizers and plant nutrition, pest and disease management, seed and plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, pesticides and pollination.</p>	Nine case studies conducted based on pilot projects in intensification (and the impact on/contribution of ecosystem services).
	<p>(2) Undertake initial development of policy options for sustainable crop production intensification, based on technical case studies.</p>	Ten policy options papers produced for specific technologies (CA, IPM, pollination, etc).
	<p>(3) Develop methodologies for baseline and monitoring of sustainable crop production intensification programmes.</p>	Five publications and supporting documents on measurement methods.
<b>2 - 2012-2013</b>	<p>(1) <i>Report to COAG.</i></p>	<i>Paper to COAG</i>
	<p>(2) Work with partners to incorporate sustainable production intensification into national programme design.</p>	Incorporation of the “Save and Grow” approach into national programmes in 5 countries.
	<p>(3) Refine and further elaborate the underpinnings of sustainable intensification based on experiences with countries in implementing integrated approaches to production.</p>	Eighteen further publications, guidelines and advocacy materials, extending and refining approaches to production intensification.
<b>3 -2014-2015</b>	<p>(1) <i>Report to COAG.</i></p>	<i>Paper to COAG</i>
	<p>(2) Support the implementation of national intensification programmes (in different regions and different agro-ecological zones, wherever possible).</p>	Success indicators on programmes begin to show outcomes in improved sustainability of the programmes implemented.