

Draft Strategy Note – Crops Sector

I. Analysis of needs and FAO's comparative advantage

1. The world is facing unprecedented demands for crops for food and for livestock feed. To meet this demand, global crop production will need to nearly double during the period 2000 to 2050. As human population and urbanization continue to increase, and as growing numbers of more affluent people worldwide consume more livestock products, world prices for crop commodities will rise if supply does not keep pace. Supply can also be affected by such factors as shifts in supply chains (such as into biofuels), increasing costs of key inputs (such as fuel and fertilizer) and crop failures due to adverse seasonal conditions, and to pest and disease outbreaks. In a globalized system, the impact is rapidly felt in terms of food shortages and soaring food prices. There is a new international awareness of the importance, and fragility of global food security.

2. Farmers can benefit from rising commodity prices, provided they can produce and sell marketable quality surpluses. However, in many developing countries this benefit does not automatically translate into improved rural livelihoods due to limited distribution infrastructure or systems. Further, if efforts at intensification are not sustainable they can threaten long-term production prospects. The challenge for countries is to produce sufficient safe and quality food, feed and fibre to address the needs of consumers and to develop market opportunities for resource-poor farmers, supporting local value-adding industries while maintaining the natural resource base.

3. As a neutral, multilateral organization, FAO plays a distinctive role in analyzing and developing policy options for sustainable intensification of the crops sector at national, regional and global levels. Policy makers need to address technically complex problems relating to land resources, soil fertility, water availability, plant pests and diseases, and the disruptive impact of climate change on agricultural production. FAO enjoys a number of comparative advantages with regards to sustainable intensification of the crops sector. The Organization has:

- a. the broadest perspective on policy options for intensified crop production, coupled with a long-term role in global monitoring and advocacy on emerging technologies for intensification, and with the practical experience to assist Members to scale-up the adoption of new technologies in a development context;
- b. a unique role in creating and supporting Secretariat functions for international standard setting bodies (*e.g.* IPPC, Codex), the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture, conventions (Rotterdam Convention) and agreements (Code of Conduct on Use of Pesticides) in the crops sector;
- c. a unique role in promoting processes for the conservation and sustainable use of Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) underpinning the Global Plan of Action;
- d. expertise to promote an ecosystems perspective through capacity building to address sustainability issues in the crops sector throughout the value chain;
- e. a reputation as an objective and neutral body working with all stakeholders in agricultural production, post-harvest processing, and marketing and in supporting smallholder programmes;
- f. a track record as a provider of inter-governmental platforms and technical knowledge networks to address transboundary, regional and global issues in partnerships, including non-governmental stakeholders.

II. Overall vision and major objectives

4. The overall vision of FAO's crops programme is to serve Members with knowledge and capacity building to develop and implement sound policies and programmes in the crop sector to enhance food security, nutrition/health, income and livelihoods and to protect the environment in a globalized world. The major objectives of the programme are: (i) national implementation of appropriate policies and programmes supporting intensification of crop production, with special

emphasis on ecosystem services, sustainability and the livelihoods of resource-poor farmers; (ii) improved conservation and sustainable use of relevant natural resources; and (iii) establishment of a global system of norms, standards and collaboration on crop-related issues.

III. Expected main outcomes

5. FAO's holistic crops strategy pursues five broad interdisciplinary outcomes. It integrates sustainable use of natural resources, policy assistance, agro-forestry and invasive species, rice-fish systems, crop-livestock integration and animal feed, food safety and quality, Codex standards and human nutrition, safe practices, agribusiness, agro-industry and rural infrastructure, international trade and statistics, emergencies and rehabilitation, food security and knowledge management, with core activities of plant production and protection. The crops strategy also draws on collaborative arrangements with UN (WHO, UNEP, IAEA) and non-UN bodies (CGIAR, CBD, NEPAD, CAADP), NGOs and public and private sector partners.

Outcomes	Outputs contributing to achieving outcomes
1. Governments support sustainable intensification in their crops sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International dialogue among all partners on sustainable intensification policies improved • Scientific basis for understanding and quantifying the benefits of ecosystems services and how they are affected by agricultural practices developed, to inform development of appropriate policies for optimizing provision of ecosystem services and rewarding farmers who produce them • Policy options and strategic approaches for sustainable intensification in the crops sector developed, tested and further refined based on “proof-of-concept” case studies in support of national programmes
2. Governments support improved crop-based rural livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies, strategies and programmes implemented to improve rural livelihoods, through expansion of production and marketing opportunities available to farmers and to encourage the development of those sub-sectors which seem most promising from a livelihoods perspective • Critical constraints in technology and infrastructure identified to improve quality of advice on investment to enhance farmers' access to technologies, knowledge and markets
3. Governments implement measures to support conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources implemented more fully at national and regional levels for conservation and sustainable use • Global Partnership Initiative on Plant Breeding Capacity Building implemented
4. Governments set norms affecting the crops sector, including necessary cross-border collaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full participation of countries in international standard setting bodies (IPPC, <i>Codex</i>) achieved, through an inclusive, transparent process for the development of harmonized phytosanitary standards that are recognized in the WTO SPS Agreement • National implementation of IPPC obligations and International Standards on Phytosanitary Measures improved • Rotterdam Convention implementation achieved in more countries • International Treaty (IT-PGRFA) implementation effectively supported • Forum provided for intergovernmental consultation on emerging policy issues in the crops sector

5. Governments manage plant pests and disease outbreaks successfully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and regional surveillance and early warning systems in place for major plant pests and diseases, including forecasting and vulnerability mapping to control the international spread of pests and their introduction into endangered areas • Impact of pests and diseases (on international trade and on food security), as well as management or control options, more widely understood and periodically reviewed
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IV. Implementation features

6. Provision of knowledge, information and advocacy: FAO's Crops Programme provides information and analysis on crop production and protection options to help Member Countries to optimise planning and strategic choices given their particular social, economic and environmental circumstances.

7. Policy support and capacity building: FAO's Crops Programme assists Member countries in informed decision-making and influences development of appropriate technologies and policies. Information, sector analysis and policy decision-making support is the main contribution to building the development capacity within the targeted community.

8. A neutral forum and support to standard setting and international initiatives: Various aspects of the crops sector, e.g. plant pests and diseases, food safety, plant genetic resources, trade in certain hazardous pesticides, code of conduct on pesticide use are subject to international negotiations/regulations requiring intergovernmental action for which FAO's Crops Programme provides a secretariat function, and technical advice and guidance.

9. Support to Member Countries including emergency operations: Crop-related assistance to Member countries is provided through the established network of FAO's decentralized offices, whereby priorities are set by the *National Medium Term Policy Frameworks* (NMTPF). Direct support to Member Countries is provided in the event of major plant pest or disease outbreaks, or in rehabilitation following disasters or emergencies.

10. Membership guidance: FAO's Crops Programme is supported and guided by inter-governmental fora dealing with crop production and protection issues (e.g. CPM, COAG, CGRFA, IT-PGRFA, Regional Plant Protection Organisations, Desert Locust Commissions, International Rice Commission).