

27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture - Written correspondence procedure

Item 4.2: Implementation of the recommendations of the 26th Session of the Committee

Secretariat response to written questions from the Members

The Secretariat expresses its appreciation for the comments received for the Document COAG/2020/3: “Implementation of the recommendations of the 26th Session of the Committee”. The comments are duly noted and recorded below.

Concerning a request for further information on FAO’s role and work on the transition towards sustainable food systems in line with FAO Conference Resolution 7/2019, the Secretariat notes that this topic will be discussed in the context of item 2.6 of the COAG Session “Operationalizing a food systems approach to accelerate delivery of the 2030 Agenda”.

In response to a question related to the project “Sustainable productivity in agriculture” (Recommendation 1/Paragraph 9), the Secretariat notes that the overall objective of the project is to provide evidence-based guidance and tools to promote a transition to more productive and sustainable agriculture at national and local level, in alignment with the SDGs. The project targets four pilot countries (Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic, North Macedonia and Zambia) and includes both policy and field activities. At the policy-level, the project provides guidance on instruments and mechanisms needed to foster successful transitions, through the analyses of enabling factors and interventions at multiple geographical scales. At the field-level, the project aims to equip farmers and extension services with the data, guidance and tools they need to understand the sustainability of their production systems and support their transition towards agricultural systems that are sustainable and resilient to future climate shocks. The project is in particular strengthening the tools and methodologies needed to support climate smart agriculture (CSA) and agroecology responses.

In response to a query on the negotiation progress in developing the Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction (Recommendation 2/Paragraphs 14 to 16), the Secretariat clarifies that the Voluntary Code of conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction was developed through an inclusive process under the overall direction and guidance of the COAG Bureau. Using the limited financial resources that were available, this process involved a series of global and regional forums that provided the opportunity to obtain inputs for the document and feedback on its contents from different stakeholders who work directly or indirectly on food loss and waste issues. This included policy makers; technical specialists working in the public sector at national and subnational levels; the private sector; civil society organizations; academic and research institutions; philanthropic organizations; financial institutions; regional organizations; bi-lateral development agencies; and UN agencies. Additional details on this consultation process are provided under item 2.9 of the COAG Session “Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction” (COAG/2020/13).

With regard to a comment on the Ten Elements of Agroecology peer reviewed paper, the Secretariat informs that one paper has already been published, and a second paper is under review for publication in a peer review journal (Recommendation 4/Paragraph 20).

The Secretariat acknowledges comments on the need to provide a balanced coverage of Agroecology and other innovative approaches during the Committee on World Food Security discussions (Recommendation 5/Paragraph 22).

In response to questions on the collaboration process related to Revitalizing rural areas for youth (Recommendation 7/Paragraphs 25 to 31), the Secretariat would like to note that there was extensive collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations entities, including the Rome Based Agencies, during the preparation the Rural Youth Action Plan for inputs and identification of potential joint collaborations within the various pillars. The Action Plan was shared both bilaterally and collectively via the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), including to Youth Networks. The inputs received have shaped the Action Plan to become a joint implementation tool at global, regional and country levels, and for the FAO, the primary tool directly contributing to the implementation of the UN Strategy on Youth in joint collaboration with over 50 UN entities and Youth Organizations. As per the collaboration with RBAs, the Action Plan was shared and discussed with IFAD's youth desk and WFP's youth committee (the entities responsible for youth-specific programming activities) and identification of collaboration within the various pillars has been included. FAO and other RBAs have a strong record of joint activities in terms of youth employment in agriculture, financial inclusions of youth, inclusiveness in value chains and food systems and also specific joint support to youth in fragile contexts via cash for work initiatives. The Action Plan further strengthens an already ongoing fertile collaboration.

With regard to comments on the Globally Important Heritage System (GIAHS) (Recommendation 8/Paragraphs 33 to 36), the Secretariat acknowledges the recommendation to strengthen the collaboration between GIAHS and the Mountain Partnership in order to develop a joint programme on sustainable food systems for the sustainable development of mountain regions. In this regard, the GIAHS Secretariat has been communicating with the Secretariat of the Mountain Partnership and will seek more collaboration in the area. As a programme with cross-sectoral nature, the Secretariat will aim to scale up GIAHS programme activities to contribute to achieving the goals and addressing the issues to be discussed in major conferences, such as the Food Systems Summit and the COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity scheduled in 2021.

In response to queries on work to combat Fall Armyworm (FAW) and other pests, weeds and diseases, the Secretariat refers to FAO's launch of a Global Action for FAW control with three main outcomes: establish a global coordination mechanism, reduce yield losses from FAW in countries where it is present and reduce risk of further spread (Recommendation 11). The IPPC is heavily involved in the third outcome for which a Technical Working Group has been established. In this respect, guidelines for prevention and preparedness will be ready by the end of 2020. The Global Action, with the support of IPPC, is paying special attention are the Europe, North Africa and the Pacific regions. The Secretariat agrees with the need to build resilience in farming systems to pests, weeds, and diseases in general. In this regard, the FAW Secretariat is working at collecting all integrated pest management solutions available for FAW management and preparing several packages that take into consideration the different agroecological zones and in particular the resilience of the system to other pests, not only transboundary pest. The approach is holistic and context based, bearing in mind that FAW is a problem for farmers and capillary action of outreach and capacity development is needed..

The Secretariat acknowledges the need to address greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and work on climate change mitigation (recommendation 12/Paragraphs 51 to 53). The Secretariat notes that, as part of the Organization's support to the countries, FAO has been implementing already for several years the Mitigation of Climate Change in Agriculture (MICCA) Programme. Originally, the MICCA programme focused on supporting countries to monitor and assess GHG emissions and the mitigation potential, such as supporting the development of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) in agriculture. Since the Paris Agreement adoption, FAO is promoting a more holistic approach to mitigation, considering synergies and trade-offs with adaptation and food security and nutrition,

including the SDGs and the UN 2030 Agenda. The MICCA team also provides technical support to the FAO members under the overall implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) to ensure practical implementation of such integrated approach and ensure consolidated FAO response to complex climate change and food security challenges.

With regard to a comment related to the Global Soil Partnership (Recommendation 19/Paragraph 80), the Secretariat notes that the Global Soil Partnership supports member countries in developing capacities for digital soil mapping and the establishment of national soil information systems, acknowledging that this is a basis for decision making.

The Secretariat takes note of the comments on the inclusion of a comprehensive assessment in proposals for International Years and Days against the criteria adopted by UN ECOSOC and the 38th FAO Conference in 2013 for the proclamation of International Years. The Secretariat will inform the requesting Members accordingly in preparing their proposals for the proclamation of International Days and Years.

The Secretariat welcomes the suggestion to promote knowledge exchange between parties, including on innovative solutions to combat the gaps and difficulties in agrifood sustainability, following the COVID-19 crisis. The Secretariat notes that FAO's Hand in Hand Initiative (HIH) is a major innovation in the way FAO engages its partners and a way to promote innovation and new forms of collaboration between Members and their many development partners at country level. Thanks to the HIH, FAO has increased its leaning and innovations, as well as those of its partners, through innovation of practices, in joint delivery of new services, in data collection, analysis and tools to transform them into actionable information or in business models and governance. As this has been done during the COVID-19 pandemic, the HIH approach has demonstrated that it is a highly effective framework to enable integrated, rapid response to emergent COVID-19 impacts on food systems and nutrition, increased access to data and new practices, and FAO's ability to promote innovation.