



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL EVENT

Transforming agrifood systems to increase resilience and achieve the 2030 Agenda

**Harnessing the potential of Small Island Developing
States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked
Developing Countries**

Call for Action

Thursday, 29 June 2023

INTRODUCTION

Ministers and representatives of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), along with representatives of some of FAO's resource partners, assembled for the high-level event in Rome on 29 June 2023, organized by FAO, to discuss common challenges and strengthen FAO's technical support by identifying actions to transform their agrifood systems and accelerate and scale-up progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Participants recognized the timeliness of the meeting as the world is at the midway point to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with achievement of the SDGs off track. The principle of leaving no one behind is at the core of the SDGs, shared by all countries, working together to secure the rights and well-being of everyone - particularly the most vulnerable - on a healthy, thriving planet.

The meeting recalled the Secretary-General's report to the Seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly [A/78/80-E/2023/64], which states that of the roughly 140 SDG targets with data, only about 12 percent are on track; close to half, though showing progress, are moderately or severely off track and some 30 percent have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline. The report further posits that under current trends, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030 - and only about one-third of countries will meet the target to halve national poverty levels.

The meeting called for increased technical support from FAO to scale-up actions to meet the SDG targets and the four betters: *better production, better nutrition, a better environment* and a *better life*, to ensure that the SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs are not left behind.

Participants confirmed that efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems are critical to address common challenges, increase food security, improve nutrition, reduce poverty, and achieve climate and environmental commitments and the SDGs.

Delegates underscored that agrifood systems are also crucial to their countries' economic growth: accounting for 4 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) and in some SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs, up to more than 25 percent of GDP. Agricultural development is one of the most powerful tools to end extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, and feed a projected 9.7 billion people by 2050. Growth in the agriculture sector is also one of the most effective ways to increase incomes among the poorest compared to other sectors. The meeting underscored that FAO's technical expertise in this sector is critical.

Delegates acknowledged that to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030, immediate and intensified efforts leading to concrete actions are required to transform agrifood systems, ensure food security and nutrition and invest in sustainable agricultural practices.

IMPORTANCE OF AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS FOR VULNERABLE COUNTRIES

Delegates emphasized that SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs are primarily agricultural economies with 50 percent of their populations engaged in the sector. Low productivity is, however, a major challenge for smallholders, who find it difficult to increase productivity because of their limited access to markets, including agri-finance to invest in modern inputs and technologies. Low yields and weak market integration lead to fragmentation of production, low incomes, food insecurity, and pervasive poverty.

Some delegations pointed to land degradation as a major problem, due to increasing population pressure, soil erosion, water scarcity and the breakdown of traditional systems for soil fertility.

Due to economic downturns, conflicts, the cascading impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, as well as growing inequalities, participants warned that there is a risk that more people in these vulnerable countries will be pushed into food insecurity and extreme poverty in the short-term.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT BY FAO TRANSFORMING AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs highlighted the heightened vulnerability of their agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors to climate change as well as their food import dependencies. Countries requested FAO's support to implement solutions to address the climate crisis by building resilience in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors, including through nature-based solutions and climate and energy-smart agricultural practices.

Recognizing that funding volumes and facilitated access to climate finance remain a major challenge, SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs requested FAO to provide technical support to scale-up the current low levels of public and private finance to address loss and damage in their agrifood systems.

SCALING UP RESILIENCE FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Participants emphasized their common environmental, economic and social challenges and the need for programmes and strategies to enhance resilience throughout the value chain and strengthen their agrifood systems. International agencies are called to support countries in (i) identifying and measuring challenges; (ii) developing effective policy recommendations; and (iii) scaling-up programmes at country level in order to reach farmers.

Countries underscored the importance of investing in innovation, knowledge and human capital, for farmers, researchers and agronomists as well as improving farmers' access to credit and agricultural insurance to enable them to effectively manage and recover from shocks. FAO was requested to assist farmers to develop capacity to access finance.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND | BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE INVESTING PROCESS

Access to finance is a major challenge for SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs. More and better public and private investment and finance, and other innovative solutions, are needed to accelerate the transformation of agrifood systems in order to achieve the SDGs. SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs requested FAO to continue supporting this objective through its Investment Centre, FAO partnerships with international financial institutions, and through initiatives like Hand-in-Hand. Countries further requested support to strengthen access to data, information and technical assistance to de-risk investment and leverage more public and private finance from governments, international and national financial institutions.

The local financial sector in SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs is often not able to provide adequate products and services to small-scale farmers and small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). Countries requested FAO to support capacity development, promotion of innovative financial instruments including risk management (e.g. insurance), and digital technologies (Fintech) to help national financial institutions enhance their capacity to provide more finance to farmers and the private sector, including SMEs.

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE AND FOOD SECURE WORLD FOR ALL

SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs called for FAO to support enhanced collaboration to address common challenges, share experiences and support each other's sustainable development processes for agrifood systems transformation. In particular, to implement high-impact initiatives; improve access to finance and investments; increase research, transfer of innovation and technology and structural transformation; enhance access to markets and trade; and collectively increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and other stressors.

Countries called upon delegations to the upcoming 4th International Conference on SIDS and the 3rd UN Conference on LLDCs to incorporate the need for durable and reinvigorated partnership mechanisms for agrifood systems transformation, with clear goals, in their outcome documents. Partnerships should focus specifically on food security and nutrition, on the resilience of vulnerable communities, with a special emphasis on women and youth.

The meeting requested that the outcome of this meeting be shared at relevant upcoming fora, including the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment, the 2023 SDG Summit and preparatory meetings for the 3rd United Nations Conference on LLDCs and the 4th International Conference on SIDS, to ensure that agrifood systems transformation is a priority in these processes.

Recalling the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022-2031, the meeting requested FAO to take an increasingly active role in supporting the implementation of actions set out in the roadmap to support LDCs in transforming their agrifood systems and to scale-up implementation to achieve the SDGs.

The meeting proposed the establishment of a Ministerial network for SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs, with technical support from FAO, to share experiences and collectively build resilience to climate change, resilience to food insecurity and secure investments to scale-up transformation of agrifood systems through means of implementation such as:

- The Hand-in-Hand Initiative;
- The One Country One Priority Product Initiative;
- The Green Cities Initiative;
- The Blue Transformation Roadmap; and
- Innovative climate financing, including the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility.