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# FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IMPACT, RESILIENCE, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION (FIRST)

## FAO AND EU PARTNERSHIP POLICY ASSISTANCE FACILITY

### BACKGROUND

Currently 795 million people still suffer from chronic hunger.<sup>1</sup> The human, social and economic costs to society at large are enormous in terms of lost productivity, health, well-being, decreased learning ability and reduced fulfilment of human potential. The food price crisis of 2007–2008 and the subsequent period of high food price volatility not only sparked a global rethinking of food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture (FNSSA), but also led to its rise on the agendas of political leaders in many countries and in regional, subregional and global institutions and country groupings, such as the G20 and the G8. The creation of the UN High-level Task Force on Global Food and



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Nutrition Security, the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), and a range of global and regional initiatives underline the importance of food security in the global and regional development agendas.

The number of countries (about 61) that have identified FNSSA as a priority sector for European Union (EU) support has almost tripled since the last planning cycle. Translating this renewed political commitment into action and tangible results requires that:

- ◆ FNSSA objectives and considerations are explicitly incorporated in sectoral and cross-sectoral policy, investment and programme frameworks, including a firm commitment to improving diets and raising levels of nutrition, while improving the status of women, children, and poor and vulnerable population groups;

<sup>1</sup> FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2015. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress*. Rome, FAO.

- ◆ All relevant stakeholders are able to participate in inclusive and evidence-based dialogue around the governance of FNSSA issues and to engage in concerted action at all stages of the policy process.

Prerequisites for this to happen include a common understanding of FNSSA problems and solutions among decision-makers; the collection and use of robust FNSSA data; information and analysis in decision-making processes; the existence of capacities for policy analysis, planning and implementation; and the availability of effective accountability mechanisms that build on evidence generated through systematic progress monitoring and impact evaluation.

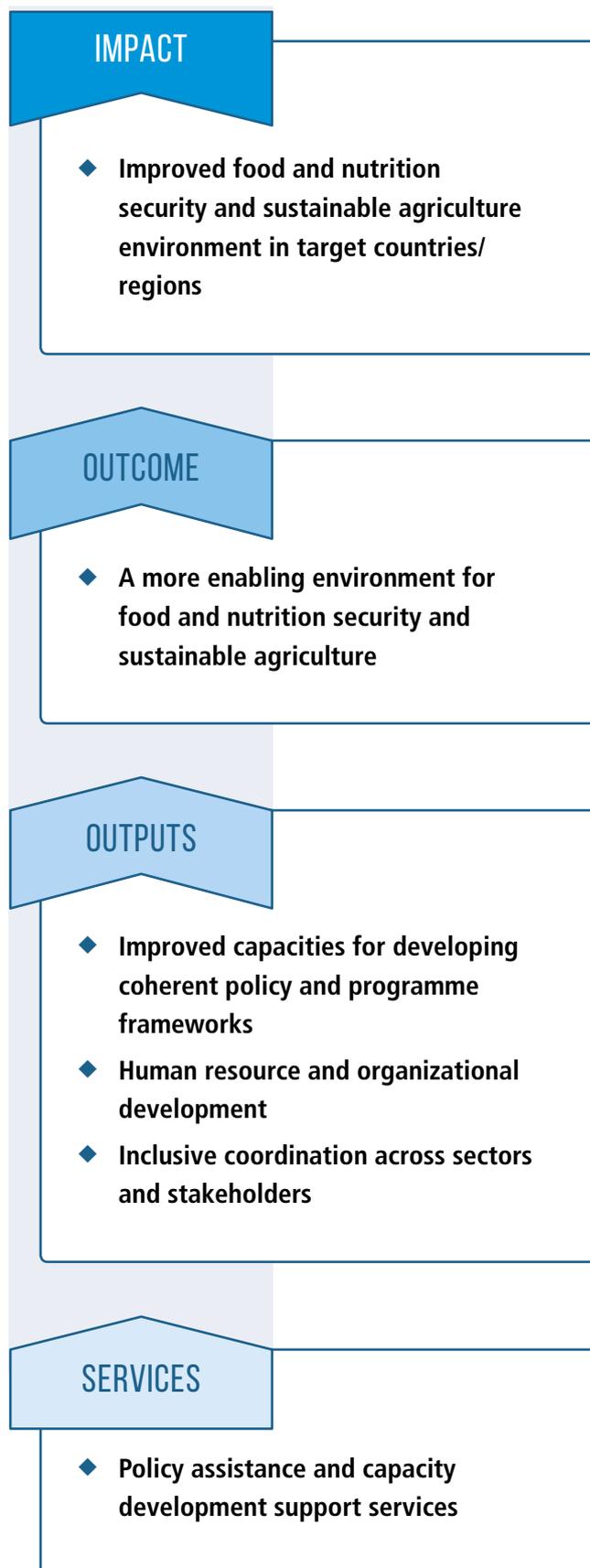
The FIRST Policy Assistance Facility provides added value to the nearly €8 billion of European Commission (EC) funds that are being dedicated to improve FNSSA at the country level during the 2014–2020 period, through anticipated improvements in the enabling environment for FNSSA, in particular in terms of evidence-based and inclusive policy dialogue and stakeholder coordination.<sup>2</sup>

## EXPECTED RESULTS

The main purpose of the FIRST programme is to strengthen the enabling environment for food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture in selected priority countries and, when appropriate, regional organizations.

For the delivery of policy assistance and capacity development services, FIRST relies on a network of policy officers and technical experts who are technically highly competent in the FNSSA policy and governance domain. They must have a sound understanding of complex systems change in a multisectoral context, be familiar with relevant methodologies (such as capacity assessment and planning), and be able to engage effectively as change agents, which requires skills in process facilitation, communication and cultural sensitivity.

The figure below depicts the underpinning **theory of change**:



<sup>2</sup> FIRST investment represents less than 0.05% of the total EC support to this area.



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## SCOPE

FIRST focuses primarily on the provision of policy assistance and capacity development support at the country level. However, support may also be given to regional organizations involved in policy processes that are concretely relevant to national FNSSA policies. The provision of policy assistance under FIRST is primarily driven by the volume of demand of selected EU priority countries. However, due to resource constraints, a further selection of countries and a focus on strategic areas has been necessary for the first phase of implementation.

## PRIORITY COUNTRIES

FIRST support to priority countries is being rolled out in phases because of the volume of demand and the type of support requested by the countries. As a result of an analysis conducted on the nature of support and the window of opportunity for FAO's intervention, 33 countries, one territory and one subregional organization have been selected to kick-start the implementation in 2016.

Countries were prioritized according to the following criteria: request of support from the country; clear window of opportunity for bringing about policy change in the country; existence of an active coordination and consultation between the government, EU Delegation and FAO Representation, as well as the formulation of a joint response to the call; degree of political commitment of the requesting government; existing synergies with ongoing FAO and EU efforts in the country; application of EU technical assistance quality criteria and likelihood of effective capacity development; type of support and expert profile requested. In order to leverage the full potential of FAO support and capacity at the country level, synergies have been sought where FAO is already providing intensified support, such as in countries targeted under the Regional Initiatives where FAO is engaged in FNSSA policy work in collaboration with a variety of subregional organizations. In each country one or more significant policy processes and/or programmes have been identified that offer a clear window of opportunity for FAO to engage with governments and development partners on FNSSA.

## APPROACH AND MODALITIES

For the delivery of policy assistance and capacity development services, FIRST relies on a network of FNSSA policy officers and technical experts. The types of profiles include:

- ◆ Policy officers to be based at the country level at a national institution/ministry, with a professional background and experience appropriate for the countries' specific needs in an area related to FNSSA policy and governance;
- ◆ Technical experts in food security, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, land tenure, resilience, social protection or other areas, who are working at the policy level in support of FIRST policy officers.

Short-term expertise may be mobilized from within FAO, i.e. from the various FAO delivery and technical teams at headquarters and/or subregional offices, from consultants on the FIRST expert roster, or ad hoc as and when needed.

## IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Through FIRST, the EU takes an active role in steering implementation both at the country level through EUD and at the global level through the EC Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO). The FIRST facility is embedded within FAO's programme management and coordination structure. It contributes directly to the FNSSA policy and governance-related results envisioned under FAO's Strategic Objectives 1 and 2. FIRST is being managed and coordinated through a light management and technical coordination unit. For its country- and regional-level work, it operates through the established FAO delivery mechanisms of Country Programming Frameworks and, where relevant, Regional Initiatives. Appropriate country-level implementation arrangements are conducted with the government and key stakeholders to fit the contextual requirements.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) would like to thank the European Union for the financial support in relation to the FIRST Programme.

FIRST is being implemented in the context of FAO Strategic Programmes to:

**HELP ELIMINATE HUNGER, FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION**

**MAKE AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES MORE PRODUCTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE**

## EXTERNAL PARTNERS CANNOT “DO” CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity Development (CD) is the 'process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time'. CD can entail change of knowledge, skills, work processes, tools, systems, authority patterns, management style, etc. Like learning, CD takes place in people or organisations, and, like learning, it cannot be forced upon them. As a logical consequence, external partners cannot 'do' capacity development of others.



This basic insight has four important implications.

- ◆ CD must be owned by those who develop their capacity – otherwise it simply does not happen.
- ◆ External partners cannot design and implement CD. They can support CD processes or help create the right external incentives for CD processes.
- ◆ Those setting out to develop their capacity must be leading and driving assessment and formulation processes aiming at CD to such a degree that their ownership and commitment remains intact or even boosted.
- ◆ Implementation of CD processes must be organised so that leadership and ownership is strongly in the hand of those who develop their capacity.

*Source: European Commission. 2011. Reference Document N°6: Toolkit for Capacity Development Luxembourg.*

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