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COUNCIL

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Developments in Fora of Importance for the Mandate of FAO

Executive Summary

In keeping with Action no. 2.31 of the Immediate Plan of Action, the Council is kept abreast of developments in other fora of importance for FAO's mandate to enable dialogue to be maintained with other Governing Bodies as appropriate, in particular the Governing Bodies of the Rome-based food and agriculture agencies.

Presentations will be made on the following topics at the 142nd Session of Council:

- Emergency and Humanitarian Assistance;
- 9th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests;
- e-Agriculture: Enhancing the Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Rural Development and Food Security;
- Coherence in Information for Agricultural Research for Development Initiative: making the Outputs of Agricultural Research Truly Accessible;
- UN Inter-Agency Communication for Development Round Table;
- Collaboration among the Rome-based Agencies.

The above topics are presented to the 142nd Session of the Council for information only.

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I. Emergency and Humanitarian Assistance

1. An important new result in the area of humanitarian assistance has been the endorsement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), on 15 December 2010, of the FAO/WFP co-led Food Security Cluster (FSC).
2. The FSC aims at improving food security responses in humanitarian situations through improved predictability, accountability and partnership in all sectors or areas of activity in a country (country-level clusters), addressing the three components of food security namely food availability, food access and food consumption/utilization. The FSC was operationally launched by FAO and WFP in April 2011 and is based in Rome.
3. The global support team includes FAO, WFP, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Organizations and other humanitarian institutions. Food security clusters are already helping to coordinate food security responses in more than 25 countries worldwide that have been affected by large-scale natural disasters, conflicts or protracted crises. The new FSC provides an international platform for supporting and enhancing these country-level food security initiatives.

II. 9th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

4. The 9th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) (New York, 24 January to 4 February 2011), in its omnibus resolution on Forests for People, Livelihoods and Poverty Eradication invited:
 - i) FAO to consider how to further incorporate elements of the Forest Instrument and Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs) into its World's Forest Assessment reports and programme.
 - ii) The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), of which FAO is the Chair, and other relevant actors like FAO, to work on the following areas: forest law enforcement and governance; investment in sustainable forest management (SFM); security of tenure rights; forest use by indigenous people, local and forest-dependent communities; capacity building to practice SFM; forest landscape restoration; water from forests; forest education; community-company partnerships and small- and medium-sized forest-based enterprises for SFM; occupational health and safety issues; forest valuation methodologies; communication and management skills; economic, social and environmental benefits of forests and trees outside forests; North-South and South-South cooperation; promote multiple values of forests.

III. e-Agriculture: Enhancing the Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Rural Development and Food Security

5. FAO considers Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) a critical part of rural development, information management, and capacity development. At the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in Tunisia from 16 to 18 November 2005, the Organization accepted responsibility for Action Line "C.7 e-Agriculture". FAO reports annually to the UN Secretary-General and to the World Summit on the Information Society Forum hosted by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
6. e-Agriculture is a fast evolving field focusing on the enhancement of agricultural and rural development through improved ICT processes and partnerships. In 2007, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) launched the e-Agriculture Community of Practice to enhance the role of ICT in agricultural development and food security. Now, with over 7,000 members from more than 150 countries, the Community is active on three levels: a knowledge sharing platform on the Web; at face-to-face events; and the in-country interventions of members.

7. In 2010, FAO, IFAD and WFP organized several events where e-Agriculture Community members from around the world participated in activities such as online forum discussions (virtual meetings), international and regional meetings, and free online capacity development opportunities (through the Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) partnership). Participation from both the private sector and non-UN organizations was secured with subject matter experts volunteering their time. Virtual forums were held on “Gender, ICTs and Rural Livelihoods”; “The Role of ICTs in Agricultural Value Chains”; “Learning Repositories in Agriculture Food and Environment”; and “ICT for Rural Economic Development”. FAO and IFAD organized the launch of UNCTAD’s “Information Economy Report 2010” in Rome on 27 October 2010.

IV. Coherence in Information for Agricultural Research for Development Initiative: Making the Outputs of Agricultural Research Truly Accessible

8. FAO, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), the CGIAR and other major international and regional organizations have developed the Coherence in Information for Agricultural Research for Development Initiative (CIARD), with the following vision: “To make public domain agricultural research information and knowledge truly accessible to all”. CIARD aims to enable organisations and individuals that create or possess agricultural knowledge to disseminate and share it more openly and effectively. In 2010, the CIARD initiative was endorsed at the first Global Conference on Agricultural research for Development, and by the General Assembly of the Forum on Agricultural Research for Africa. The participating institutions in CIARD have endorsed a global manifesto, evaluate their approaches to sharing information against the CIARD “Checklist of Good Practices”, follow a set of Pathways towards better accessibility of information, and register their public information services in the global registry called the RING. Currently, more than 130 major information services registered on the RING from around the world facilitate access to millions of information objects, with new registrations constantly being received.

V. UN Inter-Agency Communication for Development Round Table

9. FAO is an active member of the UN Round Table on Communication for Development (C4D), a bi-annual meeting of UN agencies, with the participation of selected donors, foundations, NGOs and practitioners of C4D, which aims to provide strategic direction and input to development communication programmes. The meetings are organized on a rotational basis by interested UN agencies under the leadership of UNESCO, who is responsible for reporting their outcomes to the UN General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 50/130 of 20 December 1995. Meetings of the Round Table have taken place since 1988, of which FAO hosted the 3rd and the 9th Round Table in 1991 and 2004 respectively.

10. The C4D work carried out within various UN Agencies and the inter-agency collaborations in this field, are highlighted in “Communication for Development: Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations” a joint publication released in March 2011 and signed by the heads of seven UN Agencies, including FAO.

11. The next Round Table will be hosted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in November 2011 under the title “Transforming Society with Adolescent Girls through Communication for Development” and FAO is a potential candidate for hosting the 2013 Round Table.

VI. Collaboration among the Rome-based Agencies

12. Collaboration among FAO, the WFP and IFAD has continued under the three results-based Pilot Action Plans on Transition from Relief to Development; Early Warning and Information Systems for Food and Nutrition Security, and Communication and Advocacy. The next phase for the Pilot Action Plans would be their mainstreaming in work programmes and produce Lessons Learned to provide evidence of the benefits and the returns of the collaboration:

- a) Countries in transition from relief to development: Collaboration continues for the rehabilitation phase of Pakistan and Haiti in the aftermath of a natural disaster of catastrophic proportions. To boost the Government's response immediately after the earthquake, FAO, IFAD and WFP formed a tripartite taskforce supporting a Haitian-led food security programme. FAO and WFP are also conducting joint activities related to the monitoring of the food security situation in the country. In Pakistan, following the end of the flood relief phase in January 2011, a coordination mechanism for the Early Recovery phase is being established, which includes a Sectoral Working Group on Agriculture and Food Security, co-chaired by FAO, WFP and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Pakistan.
 - b) Information Systems for Food and Nutrition Security (ISFNS): Building on their draft corporate strategies developed in 2010, FAO and WFP have developed a draft Joint ISFNS Strategy, which integrates elements of the respective corporate strategies emphasizing the areas of joint and complementary work. The Joint Strategy will be supplemented by an implementation plan which is currently under development. A workshop to review the Joint Strategy along with the integrated implementation plan was held earlier this month. . The draft joint strategy will be submitted to the Programme Committee for review in October 2011.
 - c) Communication and Advocacy: A joint communication plan to highlight the hunger issue at the 2010 United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit has enhanced the agencies' cooperation in this area. During the World Food Day observance in October 2010, the heads of the three Rome-based agencies addressed the global community on the theme of "United against Hunger", and will continue for the 2011 World Food Day observance (Rome, 17 October) on the theme "Food prices – from crisis to stability".
13. Beyond the Pilot Action Plans efforts are underway to enhance collaboration on other areas related to MDG1 (Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger) through the integration of food security and nutrition issues into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework's (UNDAF) formulation at country level. In this regard, within the UNDAF Programming Network of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), the International Labour Organization (ILO), WFP and FAO are leading the preparation of the "Guidance Note on Integrating Food and Nutrition Security into country analysis and UNDAF" to be used by UN Country Teams (UNCTs). The finalized guidance note aims at strengthening collective action by the UN system to help ensure that food insecurity and malnutrition do not hamper economic growth, human development or poverty reduction, accelerating thus the achievement of MDG 1.
14. FAO provides support for WFP in many of the Purchase for Progress (P4P) countries to help leverage purchasing power in new ways aimed at developing agricultural markets, supporting smallholder engagement and creating market outlets which reflect FAO's technical expertise.
15. Administrative collaboration: The three Rome-based Agencies continue to collaborate in order to achieve cost savings and efficiency gains. An example is the Common Procurement Team, which during 2010 issued 18 tenders with an aggregate value of USD 23 million for the three Rome-based Agencies. On the 13 contracts already awarded by FAO a potential saving of USD900,000 has been estimated. Through this collaboration, the three agencies benefit from favourable pricing obtained through aggregating their volumes. In addition, the three agencies continue to collaborate in areas related to facilities management, travel and matter pertaining to privileges and immunities.