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South-South and Triangular Cooperation for the Eradication of Hunger and Rural Poverty and for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Executive Summary

- The Latin American and Caribbean region continues to be a pioneer in increasing flows of South-South Cooperation (SSC) Knowledge exchange, particularly between public institutions, is making it possible to more efficiently and effectively share the vast experience that exists on policies, programmes, good practices, methodologies and technologies, successful experiences and lessons learned, with countries that need to improve the provision of their services and support the population groups that are most vulnerable to food and nutritional insecurity and rural poverty.
- Some countries and territories, such as Haiti and the Central American Dry Corridor, still have population concentrations living in a situation of food insecurity, which require special attention to share successful development solutions that produce effective results more quickly. Institutional capacity strengthening in the territorial, regional and national domains, with better articulation, coordination, and complementarity between development actors is a priority.
- The Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025 of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) is another focus of attention for SSC efforts between countries. Implementation of the Plan will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represent the most ambitious global framework on which FAO Member Nations, and Latin American and Caribbean countries in particular, must focus and direct their efforts.

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Suggested action by the Regional Conference

Call on Member Nations to:

- Share their knowledge and experiences with institutions related to food and agriculture through greater participation by countries in the FAO South-South Cooperation Portal.
- Target part of their bilateral and triangular SSC on supporting the implementation of the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition, and Hunger Eradication 2025.
- Increase their cooperation for the priority Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Haiti and the countries of the Central American Dry Corridor.
- Create a regional fund financed with voluntary contributions made by the countries, particularly middle- and high-income ones, traditional cooperating countries, and other public and private partners, to facilitate South-South exchange under FAO auspices.
- Increase efforts to improve the articulation of public spending, financing, investments (public and private) and both traditional and South-South Cooperation to meet the challenges facing countries in the region.

Please send any questions on this document to the Secretary for LARC 34, Tito.Diaz@fao.org

I. Introduction

1. Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the most active regions in terms of exchanging knowledge and experiences through SSC. The latest report from the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB) 2015¹ describes an increase in SSC flows between countries, with a total of 576 bilateral horizontal SCC projects and 399 actions recorded in 2013 —up by 4% and 67%, respectively, on the previous year's figures. Triangular South-South Cooperation (TSSC) is also very active, with a total of 68 projects and 98 actions registered in the same year; and, although the number of projects is down by 12%, the number of actions is 78% higher than in the year prior to the report. Moreover, for the same year, the number of regional horizontal South-South Cooperation programmes and projects also increased (to 50 and 28, respectively).

2. Countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay remain the pioneers in sharing their experiences and knowledge in several sectors, accounting for roughly 85% of total bilateral SSC projects² and about 80% of TSSC projects. Nearly all of the region's countries are SSC requesters, with El Salvador, Bolivia, Ecuador and Uruguay the most active in this regard.³

3. Approximately one third of bilateral SSC projects were targeted on capacity strengthening in the social sector, particularly health; another third had an economic orientation, particularly the agricultural production sector; and about one tenth of the total was aimed at strengthening government institutions in different policy domains.

4. At the global⁴ and regional⁵ levels, South-South Cooperation is recognized as an important element of international development cooperation, and as a complement to North-South Cooperation as a way to “pool relevant experiences and specialized knowledge in development cooperation”.

¹ SEGIB. 2015. Report on South-South cooperation in Latin America.

² Name used in the report mentioned.

³ Op cit.

⁴ Third International Conference on Financing for Development (July 2015). See United Nations, 2015, Report of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

⁵ In particular the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in its third and fourth Declaration of Ministers of State and Government in Costa Rica and Ecuador, respectively.

II. South-SouthFAO and South-South and Triangular Cooperation

5. Following the 2013 launch of its South-South Cooperation Strategy, FAO has promoted SSC as a mechanism enabling policy dialogue, capacity strengthening, and exchange of knowledge and experiences between decision-makers, experts and technical staff of government institutions in the countries and of integration organisations and other stakeholders, on the issues addressed in the five Strategic Objectives through which FAO organizes its assistance and to countries.
6. In the two years since the previous FAO Regional Conference, South-South exchange has increased thanks to the cooperation received from Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela. Over 30 government institutions, through their technical staff and experts, have shared development solutions on nutrition, policies on food and nutritional security (FNS), family farming, risk reduction, resilience, production technologies, supply systems, social organization and other issues.
7. Apart from serving as a facilitator and promoter of bilateral and triangular SSC, FAO also provides technical assistance and supervision, implemented through the widespread presence of its offices in the countries, mobilizes resources and increases visibility, and it and offers a neutral workspace with different actors at the subnational, national and regional levels. Other countries are also helping to expand the technical assistance that FAO provides through cooperation from its referral centres.⁶
8. In other cases, FAO has had little capacity to meet the demand for SSC from countries, owing to little availability of economic resources and the use of those that are available to assist the 16 priority countries pursuant to the mandate adopted at the previous Regional Conference.
9. In addition, civil society entities, provincial/local governments and universities, while being willing to provide their technical cooperation to strengthen the capacities of their peers in other countries, and at the same time request SSC, have limitations for doing so. An example is the Regional Rural Dialogue of Central America, which has requested an exchange of experiences with the specialized meeting on family farming (REAF); or the case of municipalities in different countries that have sought information on experience on articulating multisectoral efforts for the governance of food and nutritional security, territorial rural development and other issues. The Brazil-FAO programme has been an important tool for meeting this type of SSC demand.
10. The constitution of a fund with voluntary contributions from the countries, particularly middle- and high-income ones, together with official development assistance (traditional cooperation partners), and from other public and private partners, should make it possible to expand the triangular SSC which FAO is mobilizing, and promote cooperation that can also be offered by countries that have budget constraints (Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru, among others).
11. An example to guide the creation of a fund in Latin America and the Caribbean is the similar Africa Solidarity Trust Fund,⁷ which was set up in 2013 as an African-led initiative to improve agriculture and food security. Administered by FAO in collaboration with key partners, the Fund aims to share the resources of Africa's strongest economies, to implement initiatives in the framework of the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).
12. Another of the pillars of the FAO SSC strategy is the promotion of networks, platforms and knowledge management, on which progress has also been made, with the launching of the FAO South-South Cooperation Portal, which aims to provide information on the specialized competencies and institutions of countries of the south in the FNS and agricultural domains. The portal is constituted as a gateway through which countries can make commitments with FAO to facilitate SSC. Three Latin American and Caribbean countries (Argentina, Peru and Uruguay) are currently participating actively.
13. At the regional and national levels, FAO capacities have been progressively expanded through facilitation and support to national processes, but also through better identification of the supply of and demand for SSC in countries in which the Country Priority Frameworks (CPFs) are being updated.

⁶ An example is the National Advisory Commission on Agricultural Biotechnology (CONABIA).

⁷<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/030/mj556s.pdf>

Working guides have also been prepared, and instruments to facilitate monitoring and follow-up of SSC are currently being upgraded.

III. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and South-South Cooperation

14. Over the biennium, FAO has continued to facilitate and promote SSC among Latin American and Caribbean countries. An example is FAO support in implementing the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition, and Hunger Eradication 2025, in which SSC has made it possible to facilitate policy dialogue and capacity strengthening at both the regional and the national levels. The Third Progress Report as of December 2015 a practical tool for SSC is in itself, since it incorporates information on the national measures and actions adopted on the four pillars.

15. In support of this plan, the CELAC Food and Nutritional Security (FNS) Platform,⁸ developed between FAO and the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), was launched to provide Member Nations and the public at large with an information system on public policies and indicators to characterize the elements that have contributed to progress on eradicating hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean. This represents an initial step in identifying the countries' experiences (supply); and the platform could expand the service it provides to facilitate South-South-exchange, if the identification of good practices, technologies, and centres of excellence are included.

16. There are several TSSC initiatives in which FAO has facilitated tripartite missions to identify needs and/or policy dialogue on relevant issues for the countries requesting them. Examples are the case of Haiti with Peru in support of the agriculture relaunch plan; or Brazil with work supporting the strengthening of agroecological production; or Cuba in strengthening health surveillance systems in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The three initiatives are in the initial implementation process, and have had to respect the pace of institutions in Haiti to undertake cooperation missions and respond appropriately to needs. Although a time for implementation had originally been planned in all cases, it has been necessary to expand gradually, strengthening the capacities of local and national actors.

17. Guyana and Jamaica received cooperation from Chile on food and nutrition policies and programmes to prevent malnutrition in the critical first thousand days of life. The implementation of this triangular SSC initiative required a process to revise and adjust the initial proposal once initiated. Awareness raising and explanation of the Chilean experience to the authorities and technical teams of the institutions involved (health ministries), together with joint technical studies, have enabled the two countries today to adapt the design of health and nutrition programmes and, in the case of Jamaica, to include the interest in establishing nutrition-friendly legislation.

18. Another example is the creation of the network of public food marketing and supply systems in Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil, Bolivia, Mexico, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), as a mechanism of South-South institutional strengthening, whereby experiences are shared on how to boost local economies, create food reserves, promote family farming, and supply their social protection and school meal programmes.

19. As part of the Hunger-Free Meso-America programme supported by the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), various activities have been promoted in conjunction with other actors, to continue contributing to the process of strengthening good FNS governance, particularly in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. South-South exchange between the countries involved, together with the experience of other countries, has raised the possibility of enriching processes of national and subregional discussion, knowledge on good practices and lessons learned, and challenges in adjusting public policies to combat hunger and poverty.

20. In the case of Nicaragua, discussion on processes for implementing public policy on family farming has been enriched through organisational strengthening, the adoption of technologies, improvements of indigenous and indigenized seeds and strengthening of the Nicaraguan Agricultural Technology Institute (INTA) and the Agricultural Protection and Health Institute (IBSA). The National Fisheries Institute (INAPESCA) has also updated methods for evaluating fishery resources,

⁸ <http://plataformacelac.org/>

improving its estimates and the scientific bases for enhancing the design of sustainable fishery management strategies.

21. As a lesson learned in the implementation of the Hunger-Free Meso-America Programme, SSC represents an opportunity for dialogue between equivalent institutions in countries with similar socioproductive realities, in which knowledge and experience are shared and institutional technical capacities are strengthened, making it possible to attain development targets through joint efforts.

22. In the framework of implementing the Regional Programme for Strengthening the Cotton Sector through SSC, the Government of Brazil, acting through the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, together with FAO and MERCOSUR member countries, are pooling their efforts to help improve the conditions of men and women cotton farmers. Dialogue mechanisms have been promoted at both regional and national levels, and progress is being made on building capacities and strengthening coordination levels (public and public/private) to support the strengthening and general organisation of the cotton chain and cotton production systems in family farming. More recently, with the participation of representations from six countries involved, a reference framework has been agreed upon for the sustainable production of cotton in the project countries, and strategic guidelines have been defined for the sustainable management of land and natural resources. The cotton project is a benchmark in terms of dialogue, participation, and discussion and consensus mechanisms on measures and processes that need to be promoted at the national level, in accordance with the institutional and productive context of the cotton sector.

23. One of the lessons learned from the implementation of this programme is that discussion and consensus processes in the TSSC framework, take longer to implement because the actors involved need to have a shared vision of the SSC principles and their application, as well as jointly defining roles and responsibilities, the steps needed to make participation effective, consensus between the parties, and the adaptation of experiences, Brazilian in this case, to the context of each participating country.

24. On the issue of school meals and nutritional welfare, work has been done in 17 countries with support from Brazil, to strengthen capacities on aspects related to regulations and the exchange of good practices and lessons learned on the development of school meal plans, programmes and policies in the region. FAO has identified 11 elements of sustainability in the Brazilian experience; and this knowledge has been transmitted and discussed through technical assistance and school food courses through the virtual and semi-attendance platform, which facilitated dialogue and the exchange of experiences on the subject between government managers and stakeholders. Some 2,000 professionals completed the semi-attendance course “School meals: development of sustainable programmes based on the Brazilian case”. In addition, the exchange of experiences and technical support was promoted for over 5,200 professionals. Promotion of discussion and intersectoral and inter-agency articulation between government representatives, directors of school food programmes, representatives of Parliamentary Fronts against Hunger, and civil society, have been crucial in this process.

25. A lesson learned in implementing this SSC initiative is that peer dialogue, particularly between decision-makers, enables substantial progress to be made in promoting changes in the countries.

26. These are only a few of the examples of different triangular SSC initiatives that FAO is supporting, and some of the lessons learned.

IV. Proposed priorities to promote South-South Cooperation in the 2016-2017 biennium

Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025 of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

27. As a policy framework for action at the regional and national levels, it is proposed to increase bilateral and triangular SSC, for the exchange of development solutions to enable countries so

requesting to strengthen their capacities and actions on the pillars, lines of action and measures proposed in that Plan.

28. The creation of the CELAC Working Group on International Cooperation (2013),⁹ as a specialized mechanism for creating, articulating and implementing the policy guidelines for cooperation in the region, with special emphasis on strengthening cooperation ties between their members, could be a way to identify opportunities, good practices and challenges for South-South exchange in support of the CELAC FNS Plan.

Dry corridor in Central America

29. Central America is one of the world's regions with the greatest vulnerability to risks, owing to its geographical location, great climatic variability, exposure to extreme phenomena, and the institutional and socioeconomic weakness of its population. Of the 12 countries considered to have the highest climate risk index, four are Central American: El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

30. The Central American Dry Corridor¹⁰ is one of the territories most vulnerable to climate risks and natural disasters in the world. It is estimated that over 1 million families live there, relying mainly on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. Poverty and malnutrition levels are alarming, and mainly affect rural populations and indigenous communities.

31. Support from FAO and its partners and counterparties is necessary, to increase household resilience, adapt productive systems to climate change and to prevent and more effectively cope with the threats and disasters that affect agriculture, food security and nutrition. South-South exchange to learn of experiences in this regard is of great interest.

Haiti, a priority country for Latin America and the Caribbean

32. Over two thirds of the Haitian population earn their living from agriculture, and disasters are a constant threat to their livelihoods. Food insecurity is high in rural zones and in the country's capital, particularly among displaced families. Continuous efforts are needed to strengthen the capacities of institutions, local governments, producer associations and families, in the sustainable production of food, generation of income and employment; and in terms of nutrition and the conservation and marketing of food products.

33. In addition, efforts deployed by the Haitian State through the 2013-2016 Plan to Relaunch Agriculture¹¹ need to make sure that its progress is sustainable. South-South and solidarity-based cooperation from the region's countries and CELAC is an opportunity to continue contributing to the implementation of this plan.¹²

Priority issues defining the Thirty-fourth Session of the Regional Conference

34. As discussed in the main documents of this Regional Conference, there are three major challenges in the framework of the new Sustainable Development Goals for Latin America and the Caribbean: eradication of hunger and extreme poverty; rural transformation-territorial rural development; and risk management and adaptation to climate change.

⁹ The first Summit of CELAC Heads of State and Government, January 2013, mandated creation of the Working Group; and in September 2013, the framework for its functioning was agreed upon.

¹⁰ See the document LARC/16/4, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, Climate Change and Risk Management.

¹¹ Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Naturelles et du Développement Rural –MARNDR (2013). Programme Triennal de Relance Agricole 2013-2016. <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/hai146664.pdf>

¹² The objectives of the Plan are: (a) modernization of the Ministry of Agriculture to underpin sector governance; (b) improvement of agricultural productivity to increase food self-sufficiency and increase family farm incomes; (c) promotion of agribusiness with a view to boosting agricultural export growth; (d) reversal of soil degradation and promotion of the sustainable management of natural resources by fostering appropriate agricultural practices and increasing the country's permanent forest cover.

35. These challenges become thematic areas of interest in which South-South Cooperation, both bilateral and triangular, could be an appropriate tool for exchanging development solutions, for generating national, subregional and regional public goods, and for promoting integration between countries that make it possible to enhance the results and impacts on the most vulnerable population groups.

36. Moreover, SSC remains a valid and expanding mechanism to help achieve the 17 objectives and 169 targets of the SDGs. Strengthening capacities, particularly institutional ones broadly defined, is one of the pillars that will enable countries and their societies to make substantial progress in attaining the SDGs.

37. South-South Cooperation is not sufficient, however. In addition to sharing knowledge and capacities, there is also a need to invest financial resources and articulate financing, investments (public and private), and traditional and South-South Cooperation more effectively to enhance the results and impacts on the most vulnerable population groups.