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FORESTS, FOOD SECURITY, HUNGER AND POVERTY ERADICATION: FAO'S WORK ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE ROLE OF FORESTS

I. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries contribute massively to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

1. In September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations adopted a new global framework for sustainable development: “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. It is universal, inclusive and comprehensive, with perspectives and responsibilities reflecting the priorities and needs of all countries. The new agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, which are to be achieved in the next 15 years. The different goals and targets are strongly inter-dependent, aiming at a balance of different dimensions of sustainability.

2. It is now widely accepted that agriculture, forestry and fisheries are key to achieving many of the core objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. From ending poverty and hunger to responding to climate change and sustaining our natural resources, food and agriculture lie at the very heart of the 2030 Agenda. The vision set by the SDGs has moved beyond conservation to sustainable management of natural resources – including forests, water and soil.

3. Forests and sustainable management of forests are core aspects of SDG15 and its targets. Forests are also explicitly addressed in the SDG6 target 6.6 on water and are crucial to achieving many of the other SDGs and associated targets. This includes poverty eradication (SDG1), food security and nutrition (SDG2), health (SDG3), gender equality (SDG5), sustainable energy (SDG7), sustainable economic growth (SDG8), infrastructure and innovation (SDG9), sustainable consumption and production (SDG12), climate change (SDG13), peaceful and inclusive societies, justice, accountable institutions (SDG16), and means of implementation (SDG17).

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II. Opportunities and Challenges

A. Joining forces in agriculture, forestry and fisheries to eradicate hunger, eliminate poverty and manage natural resources sustainably

4. Conceived and fully owned by countries after the broadest and most intensive global multi-stakeholder consultation in history, the SDGs are the most ambitious global development push in history. The focus now shifts to implementing the 2030 Agenda, which lays out specific objectives for countries to meet by 2030 with achievements monitored closely to measure progress.

5. To implement the 2030 Agenda, each country now goes through a process of reviewing the 17 goals to determine how they can be translated into feasible but ambitious development plans for the country. Guided by the aspirations of the Agenda, countries will define their own national targets and will decide how they commit national efforts to produce real change – based on countries' own priorities, needs, capacities, resources and existing strategies. Approaches used range from comprehensive reviews and strategic re-orientation to selective identification of gaps and addressing these within existing national development plans.

6. The central role of agriculture, forestry and fisheries to achieve key goals of the SDGs is widely recognized. A major challenge for these sectors is to strengthen their engagement in highest-level discussions on national development strategies, programmes and partnerships. They must demonstrate to national decision-makers that agriculture, forestry and fisheries are important contributors to achieving national goals and targets. Equally important is to make a stronger case for investment in agriculture, forestry and fisheries in priority setting for national development.

7. The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, with their extensive and detailed attention to agriculture, biodiversity, fisheries, forests, land, soils, and water, present a unique window of opportunity for a stronger role in shaping national development trajectories. For this to happen, transformation envisaged by member states at the global level needs to be set in motion nationally within each country. National leaders are expected to look at the role of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a new way, launching a process of transformation at national levels that is owned and led by national governments and their partners and key stakeholders.

8. As countries are organizing themselves to implement the 2030 Agenda, FAO is ready to offer support to member countries with regard to agriculture, forestry and fisheries. FAO has recently reviewed its Strategic Framework putting sustainability at the centre of its efforts. Sustainable agriculture and sustainable use of natural resources are seen as essential to ending hunger and malnutrition, eradicating poverty, especially rural poverty, and to address climate change. Under the reviewed Strategic Framework, FAO has embarked on its own process of transformative change, focusing attention on achieving results, better collaboration across sectors and across different levels, and stronger involvement of stakeholders in partnerships.

B. Ensuring coherent actions across agriculture, forestry and fisheries

9. Achieving the closely inter-dependent SDGs will require looking at sustainability issues within and across agriculture, forestry and fisheries in an integrated way, taking trade-offs and synergies across sectors and sustainability dimensions into account. New governance arrangements will be required to promote and facilitate actions that are coherent and effective in inducing changes in practices. This includes finding new ways of dialogue and collaboration across sectors and with different stakeholders, and strengthening related institutional mechanisms and capacities.

10. To enhance consistency and effectiveness of actions by agriculture, forestry and fisheries in addressing different national priorities and international commitments, more dialogue on strategy development and better coordination of planning will be needed. For this, SDGs can act as an overarching umbrella, under which actions by different sectors and stakeholders from different levels

can be aligned. Any action on addressing hunger or poverty is likely to have effects on the conservation and use of natural resources, and vice versa, reflecting the strong interlinkages of the SDGs. This implies that operational ways need to be found to identify and address sustainability trade-offs and synergies. The implications of actions related to sustainable use and conservation need to be considered across the different sectors.

11. A range of global agreements exist that relate to specific parts of the vision as set up by the SDGs and which need to be adequately considered. For example, the SDG13 (climate change) fully covers the Paris Climate Agreement. This accord in turn reinforces the commitment to a transformative process that addresses a range of SDGs, recognizing that climate change and sustainable development are inextricably linked. Under Article 4 of the Paris Agreement, each party commits, inter alia, to prepare, communicate and maintain successive “nationally determined contributions” that it commits to achieve. In more than 90 percent of cases, these include adaptation and mitigation measures involving agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Similarly, the work plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets address and affect a range of SDGs, including those related to forests.

12. With regard to investment and finance, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda¹ is an integral part of SDG 17 (means of implementation), providing a global framework for financing development, with further work ahead to clarify operational details, including on para 13 and 63, which refer to forests. Investments to address climate change are expected to play a strong role in financing actions in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, affecting not only SDG13, but all SDGs relevant to them.

13. A robust follow-up and review mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is central to the new paradigm. This requires a solid framework of indicators and statistical data to monitor progress, inform policy and ensure accountability. In March 2016, the UN Statistical Commission agreed on a global SDG indicator framework as a practical starting point. FAO has been collaborating closely with the respective bodies, developing the most appropriate indicators on agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It has been requested to be “custodian agency” of 20 out of 230 SDG indicators, including three forest-related indicators, and to contribute to another five. In June 2016 the first SDG progress report was published by the UN Secretariat, with subsequent annual reports to follow.

C. Enhancing contributions by forestry while balancing use and conservation

14. Within forestry, efforts are needed to enhance the multiple contributions of forests to the different SDGs. This will require finding a balance between the need to address demands to contribute to eliminating poverty and eradicating hunger and the need to strengthen conservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests in the context of a changing climate. For example, forests contribute to poverty elimination and livelihoods through providing an estimated income of around US\$125 billion from the informal production of forest products alone (SDG1). Forests also supply at least 3.6 million tons of animal protein each year and important, micronutrient rich forest foods such as wild meat, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds (SDG2). Wood energy provides over half of all energy supply in at least 29 countries and about 2.4 billion people cook with wood fuel (SDG7). They provide a raw material source for 1.3 billion people that live in homes where forest products are the main material used for the floor, roof or walls, directly relevant for a discussion on sustainable consumption and production (SDG12). Balancing rising demands for forest products with conservation will require

¹ Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (UNGA Resolution A/RES/69/313, adopted on 27 July 2015).

enhanced dialogue with other sectors on drivers, trade-offs and synergies of potential actions, and changes in governance mechanisms across sectors.

15. Forest-relevant SDGs are addressed by a range of global agreements, instruments and processes specifying related objectives, targets, and actions. These include, among others, the UN Forest Instrument, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the International Tropical Timber Agreement, and the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration. While the existing agreements are not necessarily consistent with respective SDG targets and are governed by specific rules and time lines, there are strong thematic linkages between these and the SDGs. The various agreements can provide more detailed and operational specifications for the overarching vision of the SDGs and guidance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For example, the resolution of the 11th session of the UN Forum on Forests on strengthening the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, foresees the development of a strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 whose development is under way and which aims to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs.

III. The Way Forward: Leading Transformative Change towards Sustainability

16. The SDGs are truly transformative. They are interlinked, calling for new modalities in the way policies, programmes, partnerships and investments are pulled together to achieve common goals. The great ambition of the SDGs can only be achieved through partnerships, transforming the way different stakeholders cooperate, and by acknowledging the major interlinkages between goals and targets. A common approach of agriculture, forestry and fisheries should help mobilize more effective action.

A. A new way of working together

17. A core element of a proposed common approach of agriculture, forestry and fisheries for a transformative change towards sustainability relates to how these sectors are governed. Building a common approach requires the development of a common understanding and better dialogue across sectors. It requires involving different stakeholders, including private sector and civil society, and developing partnerships for effective action at different levels. Achieving progress on the SDGs makes it necessary to align and enhance investments towards agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and to put focus on actions that have the potential to achieve measurable results on the ground.

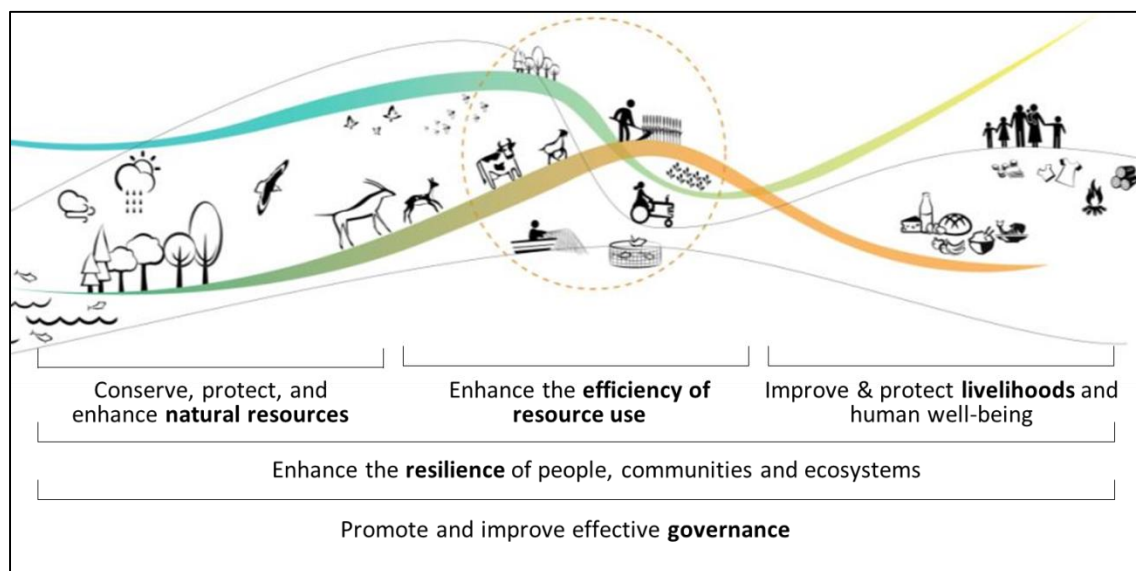
Key elements of governing transformation towards sustainability
1) Country-owned and country-led
2) Cross-sectoral, integrated approaches
3) Multi-stakeholder approaches and partnerships
4) Alignment of investments, public and private
5) Focus on actions with measurable results

B. Building a Common Vision for Sustainable Development in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

18. Shared goals and principles are a powerful entry point for discussion amongst different stakeholders on more coherent and effective actions in agriculture, forestry and fisheries in support of implementing the 2030 Agenda, providing a common reference framework. FAO, as part of its transformative change process and at technical levels, has worked towards developing a common vision and approach to address sustainable development in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors in a more effective and integrated way. This work builds on FAO's experience in the fields of sustainable management of crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, land, water and soils,

biodiversity, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation². With the overall aim of working towards a common vision for implementing the 2030 Agenda, five interconnected principles are proposed as a common framework to support policy dialogue and to identify sustainability issues and possible actions across different SDGs in different sectors and along related value chains (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Principles of a common vision for sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries



19. These principles should facilitate finding a balance between the need to enhance the contribution of natural resources to overall development and their conservation and sustainable management, and between the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. They can help in identifying interlinkages and possible impacts of actions in different sectors, allowing to address sustainability issues, trade-offs and synergies across agriculture, forestry and fisheries and related sectors. This is particularly important due to the inter-related nature of sustainability and the SDGs.

20. Such efforts towards a common vision and framework offer a unique opportunity for the forest sector to engage more effectively with agriculture and fisheries and address some of the major issues related to other sectors.

C. Contributing forestry experiences: NFP processes and C&I for SFM

21. In the global forest policy context of the 1990s, countries have agreed to use national forest programmes (NFPs) as comprehensive forest policy frameworks that are characterized by being participatory, country-owned, cross-sectoral, aiming at integrating forest issues into wider national development policies. Over a decade the NFP Facility, hosted by FAO, has supported more than 70 countries worldwide in implementing NFPs, empowering a broad range of stakeholders to participate more fully in national-level forest policy processes. One of the pillars of work of the successor “Forest & Farm Facility” is to support catalyzing multi-sectoral stakeholder policy platforms with governments at local and national levels in a range of countries worldwide.

22. With regard to demonstrating the contributions of forests to the SDGs and measuring progress towards sustainable forest management (SFM), the forest sector can build on the work on criteria and

² FAO. 2014. Building a common vision for sustainable food and agriculture. Principles and approaches. Rome. 50 pages. www.fao.org/sustainability.

indicators for sustainable forest management (C&I for SFM). C&I have undoubtedly helped in developing a common understanding of SFM and have stimulated improved monitoring. They were widely applied, particularly for international and national reporting and for forest certification. But they have fallen short of the general ambition to use them as a more operational framework of indicators for follow-up as now intended with the SDG indicators. The latter are used as a framework for setting operational targets, providing a baseline and means to assess and report on progress. In this way, SDG indicators help shape and focus policies and actions at different levels, guiding management practice, and are a key tool for communication of results. Amending and using C&I for SFM in a similar way, and thereby realizing their full potential, requires a renewed effort at all levels.

D. The Role of FAO in supporting countries

23. As cooperation among countries increases, UN support to member states is shifting – with less emphasis on joint projects and more attention to policy advice, institutional capacity development and monitoring of progress. The role of the UN system as convener and facilitator of support processes and partnerships will be fundamental to successfully implementing a transformative agenda. FAO already works hand-in-hand with governments, small producers, the private sector, civil society and other key actors in food security and sustainable development in projects and programmes across the globe. FAO country offices are now aligning their efforts with UN Country Teams to ensure that SDGs are progressively integrated into national and regional planning.

24. FAO's Strategic Framework is broadly aligned with the SDGs, promoting an integrated approach to poverty and hunger eradication, and sustainable management of natural resources. This places the Organization in a strong position to make immediate contributions to support countries in implementing and monitoring the SDGs with regard to agriculture, forestry and fisheries. FAO's new Strategy for Support to Investment in Food and Agriculture sets out to help countries develop and implement quality investment proposals and resource mobilization related to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. FAO also helps build the capacity of country stakeholders to design and implement investments, including in the context of climate finance.

25. With regard to SDG indicators, FAO has strong comparative advantages in assisting countries to meet the new monitoring challenges, including through statistical capacity building, collecting data from national sources, providing the storyline for the annual global SDG progress report, and to work on further methodological development. FAO supports countries in different ways, including e.g. through the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Statistics, the largest-ever initiative of capacity development in agricultural statistics and through support to national forest monitoring. FAO also supports countries in survey data collection, including through agricultural survey programmes.

IV. Points for consideration by the Committee

26. The 2030 Agenda requires a much more integrated approach to sustainable development than in the past. In order to reflect this, and in the context of FAO's reviewed Strategic Framework, the Organization has been working on more concerted efforts across agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It has, at technical levels, worked towards a common vision and a framework that should help mobilize consistent and effective action towards sustainable development in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda.

27. For the first time, FAO proposes to discuss the same topic in three Technical Committees in order to build a better coordinated approach in the three sectors. The guidance sought from COAG, COFI and COFO aims at strengthening FAO's support to member countries in achieving several SDG targets related to agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a more effective and integrated way.

28. The Committee may wish to invite member countries to consider:

- strengthening dialogue with agriculture, fisheries and other relevant sectors on joining efforts for transformative change towards the achievement of the SDGs, in particular on actions to

eradicate hunger and eliminate poverty while conserving and sustainably managing natural resources;

- promoting the development of a common approach to sustainability for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, based on a balancing the different dimensions of sustainability across sectors and along value chains;
- reviewing and adapting existing mechanisms and tools such as NFPs and C&I for SFM to make them more effective in governing transformation towards sustainability across sectors;
- promoting coherent and effective action in forestry in support of implementing the 2030 Agenda, including through the International Arrangements of Forests.

29. The Committee may wish to request FAO to support countries in:

- strengthening policy dialogue towards a common vision of agriculture, forestry and fisheries and enhancing governance capacities to effectively deliver joint contributions to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- integrating forestry into national development programmes and action plans, by using FAO's framework of principles for balancing the different dimensions of sustainability.