

27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture

Item 4.1: FAO's Programme of Work in Food and Agriculture under the FAO Strategic Framework

Introduction notes

FAO's Programme of Work in Food and Agriculture under the FAO Strategic Framework, builds on the review of its achievements in the food and agriculture sector during the 2018–19 biennium, on the analyses of major trends and emerging issues that will influence FAO's work and activities in these sectors, and presents the priority areas of FAO's work in these domains in the 2020–21 biennium and beyond for the Committee's guidance.

FAO's started the preparation of its new Strategic Framework in 2020 to be presented to the 42nd session of the FAO Conference in 2021. Inputs from Technical Committees represent an important step in the process of Governing Body input and oversight. Accordingly, this Committee is requested to provide guidance on areas of technical priority in 2020–21 and beyond, both with a view to guiding future work and in the context of developing the new Strategic Framework.

FAO's achievements during the biennium in relation to FAO's Strategic Objectives and related SDG indicators, including gender equality, nutrition, climate change, governance and statistics, and the regional results are reported in detail in the Programme Implementation Report 2018-19 (PIR).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change continue to drive the context in which FAO operates. At global level, FAO is strengthening strategic partnerships through major initiatives such as: the Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028); UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030); UN Decade of Action; UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030; International Decade (2018–2028) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development, and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture. FAO gained major recognition as a key player in the international climate arena, especially through its high-level participation in and contributions to UNFCCC pre-COP, COP24 and COP25, as well as the 2019 UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit.

FAO's major achievements include the promotion of innovative and inclusive approaches to sustainable agricultural production including, among others, conservation agriculture, sustainable mechanization, protected cultivation, Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), agroecology, conservation agriculture, sustainable mechanization, mainstreaming biodiversity, and protected agriculture and sustainable livestock and pastoralism.

FAO continued to promote the One Health approach to address food chain threats at global and country levels, and to prevent, detect and respond to high impact animal and zoonotic diseases, and strengthening transboundary animal disease control. FAO is at the forefront of initiatives to combat plant diseases and pests affecting livelihoods of millions of people, such as the Fall Armyworm, Desert Locust outbreaks, Red Palm Weevil (RPW), and Fusarium wilt of Banana (TR4) in affected regions and at risk.

The following developments and trends arise from the topics considered by the 27th Session of COAG, and the ongoing international processes addressing agriculture and food sectors. These include: food security and nutrition and health; food safety; natural resource management, biodiversity, disaster and climate risks and crisis, threats to the food chain, and conflicts, as well as overall transformation towards more resilient, inclusive and sustainable food systems.

The global trends and developments analysed will set the basis for the new Strategic Framework of FAO that will be developed through a consultative process during 2020-21, and include regional and sectoral trends and specificities, representing the main development challenges that countries and the development community are facing.

In this context, FAO launched a Corporate Strategic Foresight exercise in 2020 that will build upon the previous forward-looking corporate exercises. Its preliminary findings point to already identified and newly emerging interconnected drivers and related trends, including the outbreak of epidemics and pandemics such as COVID-19. The priority areas of FAO's work in food and agriculture in 2020-21 and beyond are derived from these trends and challenges, and contribute to the achievement of FAO's Strategic Objectives as central to delivering the overarching SDGs.

Several COAG 27 agenda items discuss these major trends and challenges and provide substantive input towards the priority areas of work for the Committee's considerations. Under the theme 'Sustainable Livestock for achieving the SDGs', issues are examined, such as assessing and improving the contribution of livestock to food security and nutrition and healthy diets, enhancing productivity of small-scale livestock keepers, developing knowledge and tools to guide countries' livestock policies and investments, developing solutions to reduce livestock's negative environmental impacts, and mainstreaming pastoralism and rangelands in FAO's work.

FAO's priority areas, presented to COAG 27, focus on four closely interrelated and overarching themes: (A) Achieving sustainable food systems, encompassing sustainable food and agriculture with a focus on sustainable livestock, the Urban Food Agenda, FAO's updated strategy on food safety, the Vision and Strategy for FAO's work on Nutrition, addressing Food Loss and Waste and other key areas; and enabling small holders and family farmers access to innovation; (B) Climate and Natural Resources (biodiversity, land and water) and addressing multiple crisis risks and environmental challenges: Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, Climate Change and Natural Resources; (C) addressing pests and disease threats to plant, animal and human health through the One Health approach, in particular the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security, nutrition and agriculture, locusts and the threat of zoonotic diseases; and (D) Revitalizing rural areas for youth.

Suggested actions by the Committee

- Take note and provide any comments on the achievements, and the developments and trends identified with respect to the food and agriculture sectors (Document COAG/2020/2 sections II and III);
- Provide guidance on the main priorities for FAO's work in food and agriculture in 2020-21, as well as for the review of the Strategic Framework and the preparation of the Medium Term Plan 2022-2025 (Section IV); and
- Review and advise on the global developments and their implications for the food and agriculture sector.

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