

165th Session of the Council

Item 8.1 - Report of the 27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (28 September - 2 October 2020)

The Committee on Agriculture (COAG) held its 27th Session from 28 September to 2 October 2020 and was, for the first time, conducted as a virtual event. Of the 129 Members of the Committee, 121 registered for the Session, including 9 Ministers, and over 850 participants attended over the Zoom meeting platform.

The Report of the 27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG 27) is submitted to the Council in document C 2021/21. COAG 27 had 23 items on its agenda and reviewed priority and substantive issues, as highlighted below.

The COAG 27 discussed as main theme the livestock sector contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, the Committee requested FAO to produce a comprehensive, science and evidence-based global assessment of the contribution of livestock to food security, sustainable food systems, nutrition and healthy diets, and to develop a technical document of good practices. The Committee discussed the prevention, anticipation and response to high-impact animal and plant diseases and pests and welcomed the draft resolution for consolidating the implementation of the Peste des Petits Ruminants Global Eradication Programme (PPR GEP) to achieve the goal of a PPR-free world by 2030, to be submitted to the Council at its 165th Session and subsequently to the FAO Conference at its 42nd session for adoption.

The Committee, in accordance with Rule VII.1 of its Rules of Procedure, established a Sub-Committee on Livestock and invited the Council at its 165th Session and the Conference at its 42nd Session in 2021 to endorse the Sub-Committee as an intergovernmental forum with a mandate to discuss and build consensus on livestock issues and priorities, including in poverty alleviation, food security and nutrition, sustainable livelihoods and the realization of the 2030 Agenda and adopted the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Sub-Committee. It recommended that the first session of the Sub-Committee on Livestock be held, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary funds, during the first quarter of 2022.

The Committee reviewed the progress in the implementation of FAO Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 2016-2020, and the proposal for a new FAO Action Plan on AMR 2021-2025, and requested progress updates on the Action Plan to the Programme Committee and to other Technical Committees, and acknowledged FAO's work to reduce the burden of AMR in food and agriculture.

The Committee further discussed the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on food security and nutrition, and food systems, and requested FAO to assess the specific impacts on women, youth, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, smallholders and family farmers and those exposed to conflict and protracted crisis. Further, it requested FAO to continue its support to Members in developing sustainable food systems, to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and to provide full support to the preparatory process towards the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit. The Committee also discussed the Urban Food Agenda for further elaboration of the concept and its integration into FAO's strategic work to be presented to the FAO Council.

The Committee requested FAO to develop a new Food Safety Strategy to serve as an international guidance, policy and advocacy instrument for decision-makers and to collaborate with the WHO to ensure that respective food safety strategies are aligned and mutually supportive.

The Committee welcomed the proposed Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste (FLW) Reduction (CoC), noting the role it can play in contributing to FLW reduction globally and to sustainable food systems development and achieving the SDGs, in particular SDG target 12.3, and requested to prepare a revised document in consultation with Members and under the guidance of the COAG Bureau, which is foreseen to be submitted to the 42nd Session of the Conference.

The Committee endorsed the Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP) as a living document, which can be updated to align with new FAO objectives and emerging issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic. COAG reviewed FAO's work towards enabling smallholders and family farmers to access and participate in appropriate innovation, information and advisory services for sustainable agrifood systems. It requested FAO to strengthen its strategic guidance and knowledge competencies, its technical support and capacity at headquarters and decentralized offices in this area, and to develop programmes to support Members in improving demand-driven innovation, information and advisory services, for bridging the gap between information generation and use by smallholders and family farmers as well as other vulnerable groups, by strengthening linkages between research, extension and farmers.

With respect to the Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, the Committee requested FAO to ensure that this initiative will create synergies between international organizations and stakeholders, to include in the Terms of Reference reporting mechanisms through which voluntary guidelines from the Platform on issues related to digital food and agriculture are submitted to the FAO Members for consideration through the FAO governing body process, develop a solid funding plan based on voluntary contributions; and continue developing and refining the Terms of Reference for the Platform for further review by the Programme Committee and the FAO Council.

The Committee reviewed the draft 2021-23 Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors, and provided detailed comments to be reflected in the next version of the draft Action Plan for consideration by the Council. It requested FAO to consider the outcomes of on-going processes in other *fora*, including the development of the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in the implementation of the Strategy, and its Action Plan, and to strengthen collaboration with all relevant partners, taking the "One Health" approach.

The Committee endorsed the "Global Programme on Sustainable Dryland Agriculture" and requested to integrate it into FAO's work, and suggested it be subject to monitoring and evaluation, including under the SDG monitoring framework in partnership with countries with technical experience of sustainable management of dryland agricultural systems and South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

The Committee reviewed progress of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) and the findings of the GSP evaluation and requested the Secretariat to carry out a detailed analysis of the legal and financial implications, to be submitted to the COAG at its 28th Session, and endorsed the "Resolution for International Exchange of Soil Samples for Research Purposes under Global Soil Network (GLOSOLAN)".

The Committee reviewed FAO's Programme of Work in Food and Agriculture under the FAO Strategic Framework, and the global developments and trends identified by FAO in the context of the Corporate Strategic Foresight Exercise, and new emerging interconnected drivers and trends. The Committee endorsed the main priorities identified for FAO's work in food and agriculture and encouraged additionally to maintain a strong focus on eradication of hunger and malnutrition, food systems and nutrition while strengthening work on digital agriculture, capacity development at country level for data, information and tracking of SDG indicators for better decision making, reducing food loss and waste, addressing issues

related to climate change and biodiversity, and a strategy for innovation with inclusion of smallholder farmers, as well as to further strengthen its important normative and standard setting role, and increase focus on One Health, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), food safety and addressing transboundary pests and diseases and encouraged FAO to invest and advocate for all innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems, while ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment.

Further, the Committee reviewed the implementation of the recommendations of the 26th Session of the Committee and its Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Committee (MYPOW) for 2020-2023.

Finally, the Committee endorsed the draft Conference Resolutions for the proposals for an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, an International Year of Date Palm and an International Day of Plant Health for approval by the 165th Session of the Council and adoption by the 42nd Session of the Conference.

Mr Bommakanti Rajender, Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG)