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FAO's Response to COVID-19: Building to transform

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic is entering a new phase with the proof that collective efforts and multilateral cooperation have enabled agri-food systems and trade to remain open and flowing. The pandemic and its related containment measures had a clear, but short-term effect on agricultural and food trade in 2020, but it contributed to the largest single-year increase in global hunger in decades. This means that up to 161 million people more than in 2019.

Despite all the concerns, agri-food markets and trade proved to be resilient, and agriculture emerged as a robust economic sector. One very important factor behind the resilience of international agri-food markets and trade during the pandemic has been the ample global food supplies and the positive production prospects compared, for instance, to the 2007-08 situation. However, while the global agri-food systems have remained resilient, income losses and food price spikes caused undernourishment to rise. Per capita incomes contracted in more countries than at any time in the recent past, leading to exacerbated inequalities especially in rural areas.

FAO has been intensively working on the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme since the start of the pandemic, and has mobilized financial and technical support to reach a large share of rural populations and to relaunch the economic activities. These efforts included use of data and digital technologies, and innovation to assist smallholder farmers, linking social protection to rural-based livelihood, women empowerment, humanitarian assistance, efforts towards scaling up investment for a better recovery from the pandemic, One Health approach, etc.

Working closely with the G20 Italian Presidency, the agri-food sectors are recognized to bring a unique opportunity for results and impact at scale and to reduce hunger, poverty and inequality. As the result of this exceptional cooperation, the G20 Joint Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Development placed food security at the centre of the agenda and its endorsed Matera Declaration introduced the Food Coalition as a flexible coordination mechanism for COVID-19 response and recovery in addition to all other mechanisms FAO has currently in place.

**Suggested action by the Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees,
and the Council**

The Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees, and the Council are invited to take note of the progress made and to provide guidance, as deemed appropriate.

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I. Background

A. Assessment of Food Security and Nutrition and the State of Food Markets

1. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2021, estimated that between 720 and 811 million people in the world faced hunger in 2020 - as many as 161 million more than in 2019, under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. Projections that consider the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that 30 million more people will face hunger in 2030 compared to a scenario in which the pandemic had not occurred, revealing lasting effects on global food security.

2. The 2021 Global Report on Food Crises estimated that 155 million people in 55 countries/territories were classified as being in crisis or worse (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification/Cadre Harmonisé Phase 3 or above), an increase of around 20 million people from 2019. While it is difficult to disentangle the precise effects of COVID-19 from those of other stressors, the report's food security analysis shows that the pandemic has had a compounding effect on these pre-existing and ongoing drivers of food crisis mainly through declining economic activity related to COVID-19 restrictive measures, leading to income losses and reduced household purchasing power.

3. In 2020, per capita incomes contracted in more countries than at any time in the recent past. For instance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates the pandemic to have reduced per capita incomes in advanced economies by 2.8 percent per year in 2020-22. Relative to pre-pandemic trends, the per capita income loss for emerging market and developing economies (excluding China) is 6.3 percent. This reflects again how inequalities have been exacerbated.

4. Despite the initial concerns and fears regarding the ability to withstand the shock and capacity to continue to function properly and meet the growing demand, world agri-food markets and trade proved to be resilient, with agriculture emerging as a robust economic sector. One very important factor behind the resilience of international agri-food markets and trade during the pandemic has been the ample global food supplies and the positive production prospects compared, for instance, to the 2007-08 situation. However, while the global agri-food systems have remained resilient, income losses and food price spikes caused undernourishment to rise.

5. FAO's latest figures¹ continue to point to positive conditions in 2021, namely for basic foods. Global cereal production in 2021 is forecast at 2 788 million tonnes, up 0.7 percent (18.7 million tonnes) from 2020, mainly driven by increased production prospects for coarse grains and rice. Global wheat production, by contrast, is foreseen dropping by 0.7 percent from the 2020 outturn.

6. World cereal utilization also is forecast to increase by 1.4 percent (40.1 million tonnes) from the 2020-21 level, to reach 2 809 million tonnes in 2021/2022 and mark a new record high. World cereal stocks by the close of the 2022 seasons are forecast at 809 million tonnes, down 0.9 percent from the opening levels. With these figures, the resulting world stocks-to-use ratio for cereals in 2021-22 would stand at 28.1 percent, down slightly from 2020-21, but still an appropriate level from a historical perspective. The forecast for world trade in cereals in 2021-22 stands at 466 million tonnes, down 1.3 percent from the 2020-21 record level, with expected contractions in wheat and coarse grains trade outweighing a foreseen expansion in global rice trade.

7. Global food commodity prices² rebounded rapidly in August after two consecutive months of decline, led by strong rises in the international prices of sugar, wheat and vegetable oils. The FAO Food Price Index averaged 127.4 points in August, up 12.4 percent since the beginning of the year and 33 percent since August 2020. All the price sub-indices registered increases from their levels a year ago, led by vegetable oils (67.9 percent increase), followed by sugar (48.1 percent increase) and cereals (31.1 percent increase).

¹ [FAO Cereal Supply and Demand Brief, September 2021.](#)

² [FAO Food Price Index, September 2021.](#)

8. With regard to the medium-term, the latest projections³ highlight that global demand for agricultural commodities is projected to grow at 1.2 percent per annum (p.a.) up to 2030, well below the growth registered over the last decade (2.2 percent p.a.). The projected increase is largely driven by population growth in low-income countries and higher per capita incomes in middle-income countries.

9. In high-income countries, demand growth is expected to be constrained by slow growth in population and saturation in food consumption for several commodities. Global agricultural production is projected to increase by 1.4 percent per year over the course of the next decade, predominantly in emerging economies and low-income countries and be largely driven by improvements in productivity. Improved yields are expected to account for the majority of crop production growth over the 2021-30 decade, while growth in global livestock production would be based on productivity growth and herd expansion.

10. Agricultural trade will continue to expand for most commodities, although at a slower pace than during the last decade due to expectations of a slowdown in demand growth in a number of countries and lower demand for biofuels. Global trade volumes of the major food commodities are projected to grow on average by 1.3 percent p.a. up to 2030, further contributing to food security and nutrition.

11. The major challenge that countries will face is of food access and the FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme looks at identifying actions that could help to minimize this challenge.

II. The FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme

12. With operational requirements totalling USD 1.32 billion, this programme has, as of September 2021, received confirmed and pledged contributions totalling USD 368 million, or approximately 28 percent of the target. Voluntary contributions – which are destined to both development and emergency-oriented projects – amount to USD 334 million, of which USD 265 million in approved contributions and USD 69 million in forecasted contributions. FAO's core (Technical Cooperation Programme) resources currently invested in the programme amount to approximately USD 30 million, with additional USD 1.85 million from FAO's Multidisciplinary Fund specifically allocated to the elaboration of COVID-19 data and statistics.

13. The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme also enabled partners to leverage the Organization's convening power, real-time data, early warning systems and technical expertise to direct support where and when it is needed most.

14. Following the evolution of the pandemic, the share of development-oriented approved voluntary contributions has shifted from an initial 9 percent to the current level of 32 percent of the overall approved contributions. This suggests that COVID-19 contributions under FAO's programme are evolving from an emergency to a development-based approach. FAO's COVID-19 Response is thus currently progressing towards the recovery landscape with a focus on medium and long-term interventions.

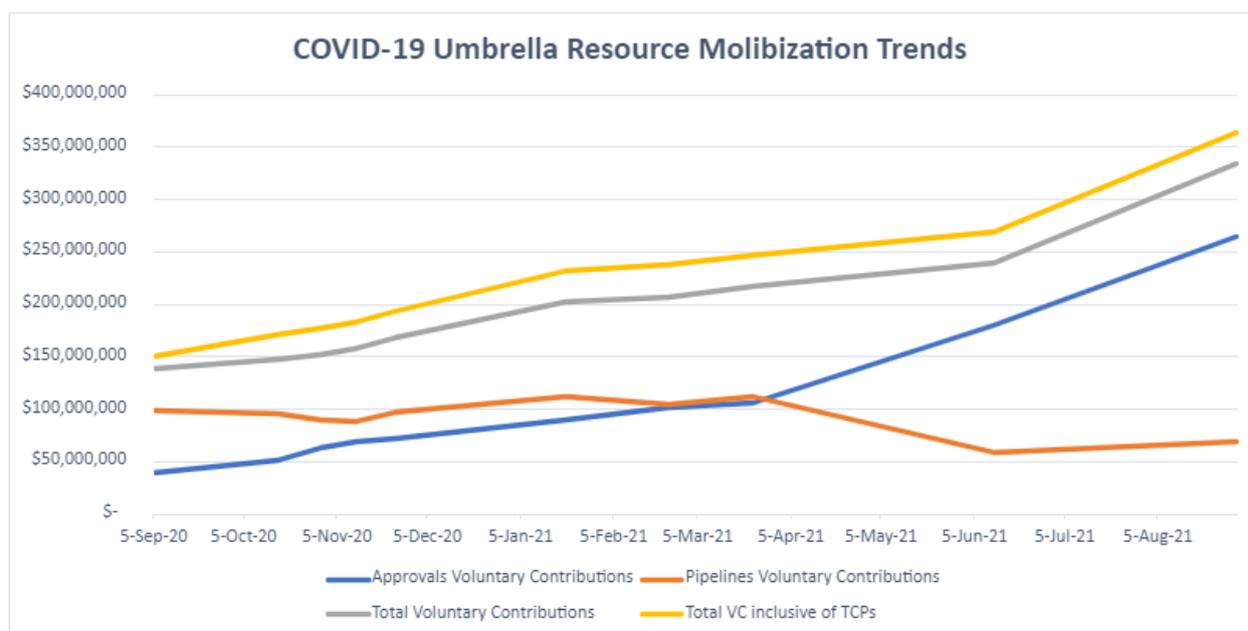
15. The World Bank, Canada, Japan, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) represent the current main resource partners investing in FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme. Their approved and forecasted contributions currently amount to more than USD 230 million, roughly 70 percent of the overall voluntary contributions received and pledged.

16. In terms of regional focus, Africa has, so far, received the largest amount of voluntary contributions and FAO resources – 34 percent of the total – followed by Near East and North Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean Region, respectively currently standing at 29 percent and 16 percent. Four percent of the overall resources are allocated to projects with global reach. On the

³ The projections presented in this document are an update of the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2021-2030, launched in July 2021.

other hand, the funding allocated to Asia and the Pacific Region (13 percent) and Europe and Central Asia (4 percent) suggests a need to further balance regional focus.

17. The programme is also facing important challenges. Indeed, while the overall trend is marking a shift towards the recovery landscape, interest in funding development-related projects for long-term interventions is resulting to be lower than the initial interest for humanitarian-related projects in the context of early emergency interventions. In addition, contributions are currently channelled to the response plan individually by each resource partner mainly through earmarked and country-specific activities, as opposed to utilizing unearmarked pooled funding such as the Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM).



18. The highlights of the main activities by each of the seven areas of work are presented as follows:

a) The Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP): Addressing the impacts of COVID 19 and safeguarding livelihoods in food-crisis contexts

19. As the impact of COVID-19 has merged with pre-existing shocks and stresses, FAO has significantly adjusted its humanitarian programming in 2021 and addressed humanitarian needs in an integrated manner. To this end, FAO's global humanitarian response has been integrated into ongoing Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) activities in coordination with other main stakeholders.

20. Putting people at the centre, FAO was able to adapt and re-programme existing resources to reach almost 24 million acutely food insecure people threatened by COVID-19 impacts. For example, in Afghanistan, FAO adapted its targeted support to pastoralists who are one of the most vulnerable groups in the region. Beside usual activities, FAO redesigned its programme to address both direct and secondary effects of the virus through the support of COVID-19 safety measures at livestock markets and on-the-ground sensitization activities, the dissemination of risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) materials, and contingency planning for pastoralists' safe transhumance to winter pastures. FAO and the Government of Japan have provided emergency assistance to very poor and disaster vulnerable communities affected by the pandemic in Bangladesh. The emergency assistance consisted of agricultural machines distribution to reduce the cultivation costs and food hygiene and safety training, which contributes to wider food security of the country by boosting agricultural productivity while safeguarding the health of key agricultural workers against infection from COVID-19.

21. FAO continued working on data collection, and analysis, which is still critical to inform and adapt emergency responses. FAO has conducted surveys and need assessments in 29 food crisis countries from July 2020 to July 2021 in order to improve programming related to COVID-19 response and address the need of the most vulnerable. Countries in which a dedicated assessment has been conducted include Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

22. To reduce the risk of virus transmission and save lives, FAO supported a series of awareness raising and sensitization campaigns among food workers in collaboration with a range of partners. Under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded global project, FAO has developed context-appropriate messages on food chain safety best practices with diverse stakeholders across countries, including women's groups, Dimitra Clubs, community radios, Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and government services. In Pakistan, FAO, together with partners, delivered both physical and remote sensitization messages to people who are the most vulnerable and food insecure affected by the immediate impacts of lockdown measures, complemented with remote communication technologies. This includes harnessing FFS platforms to disseminate crucial information on virus prevention and COVID-19 mitigation practices through regular remote and field-based training sessions. In particular, Pakistan's female breadwinners have been able to master new income-generating farming activities while keeping clear from the virus. Besides, FAO organized webinar series on RCCE for COVID-19 prevention along the food supply chain. The efforts ranged from addressing gendered impacts of COVID-19 in Pakistan, to the use of radio emissions to safeguard rural livelihoods in Colombia.

b) Data for Decision-making: Ensuring quality data and analysis for effective policy support to agri-food systems and Zero Hunger

23. FAO has consolidated the implementation of actions at global, regional and country levels in the four key outcomes identified under data for decision making: (1) rapid assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity; (2) innovative data sources to monitor the impact of COVID-19; (3) adapting agricultural data collection methods; and (4) evidence-based policy support for post-COVID-19 recovery.

24. Regarding food security assessments, rapid data collections were implemented in 20 countries⁴ based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES). A report has been published in July 2021. In addition, at least 30 countries and institutions have been supported in collection and analysis of food insecurity data to monitor the impact of COVID-19. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World⁵ report, was published in July 2021 and presents the most up-to-date information on food security and nutrition at global level and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, FAO is organizing a new data collection in 25 Small Island Developing States (SIDS)/Least Developed Countries (LDCs) around the world, with the objective of assessing the most recent evolutions of food insecurity at national and subnational level.

25. Regarding innovative data sources, FAO's Data Lab launched a Big Data Tool in mid-April 2020, as an automated interactive platform publishing real-time information updated on a daily basis. The tool scrapes daily food prices, tweets and news to analyse the COVID-19 impact on food chains. All data is accessible and searchable with a semantic search engine. The food prices analytics have been overhauled in 2021 using the daily prices to now cast consumer price indices and highlight recent events of increased volatility with global coverage. A new set of indicators is being developed on volatility in the banking sector, to connect the COVID-19 impact to the financial dimension. Additionally, the Data Lab developed a new approach to update poverty data through satellite imagery and statistical analysis of available socio-economic data. The method has been piloted in Yemen to support the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.

⁴ Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Iraq, Liberia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Zimbabwe.

⁵ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2021. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4474en>

26. Regarding adapting agricultural data collection methods, a plan was rolled out to adapt the data collection in countries where the AGRISurvey Project was implemented. This resulted, in some cases, in a temporal postponement of field activities (Cambodia, Ecuador, Nepal, Uganda) or in the merger of survey rounds (Armenia, Uganda). Some countries switched to telephone interviews (i.e. Costa Rica, Georgia) using simplified questionnaires. It also resulted in the inclusion of specific COVID-19 impact related sections into the existing questionnaires, and the simplification of other sections (Cambodia, Senegal, Uganda). In all countries, specific measures were taken for guaranteeing safe working conditions for enumerators and respondents.

27. Regarding policy support for post COVID-19 recovery, three outputs are offered: (i) a ranking of sectors where investment in agriculture have the highest payoffs for economic growth with rural poverty reduction; (ii) maps for the sectors at the top of the ranking, which help to identify the territories of highest potential for investments; and (iii) concrete investment roadmaps. Output (i) has been delivered to the Governments of Mexico and Nicaragua, and is set to be delivered to the Governments of Ecuador, Paraguay and Uganda in fall. Output (iii) is to be prepared in the last trimester but to be fully delivered in 2022. In addition, FAO has developed a monthly nominal rate of protection (NRP) indicator that will help assess in quasi real-time, the incentive/disincentive that different policy measures adopted during the pandemic may have generated for agricultural value chains. The indicator targets 30 low and middle-income countries. A dashboard is now being pilot tested with a view to launch it before the year ends.

c) Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty: Pro-poor COVID-19 responses for an inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery

28. FAO continued to respond to adverse effects of the pandemic and promote inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery by supporting social protection expansion to better reach and serve underserved groups; ensuring tenure rights and strengthening sustainable economic inclusion of small-scale producers; protecting the right to food and rural employment; strengthening rural women's economic empowerment; and building evidence on the impacts of COVID-19 on rural livelihoods of vulnerable rural populations.

29. FAO supported expansion and scale-up of national social protection programmes in Cambodia, Kenya, Myanmar, Peru, Philippines and Viet Nam; built evidence and advocated for inclusive scale-ups for informal, migrant, refugee, and agricultural workers in Kenya, Lesotho and Uganda; and expanded and enhanced social and agricultural registries in Nigeria to improve targeting and timely response. FAO improved social protection access for rural informal workers through cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire; improved social protection coverage of fishers and aquaculture workers in Brazil, Lebanon and Senegal, agro-pastoralists in Kenya and Somalia, and natural resource dependent communities in Asia and the Pacific; and reviewed modalities for government-led livelihood insurance programmes for vulnerable agricultural subsectors in Somalia.

30. In Cambodia, FAO mitigated gendered impacts of the pandemic while accelerating recovery of rural livelihoods, targeting women and girls through Dimitra Clubs and Women Empowerment-Farm Business Schools. In Niger, Dimitra Clubs continued to facilitate community engagement and serve as an entry point for field activities in the Sahel responding to COVID-19 challenges, conflicts and climate change. In Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Niger, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Uganda and Uzbekistan, FAO partnered with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the University of Central Asia to study COVID-19's impact on rural women. And in rural Nepal, FAO analysed the impacts of COVID-19 on gender empowerment outcomes and migration.

31. FAO supported cotton growing households in Burkina Faso, Mali and Pakistan to mitigate use of child labour as a coping mechanism, and further integrated prevention of child labour during crises, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, into training curricula of FFS and Dimitra Clubs. In support of the right to food, FAO organized a virtual dialogue series with parliamentarians from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to support their role in addressing the COVID-19 crises in their respective countries, with particular accent on economic inclusion, decent employment and the right to food.

32. To protect tenure rights of small-scale producers particularly threatened during the pandemic, FAO supported Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Philippines, Serbia and Viet Nam to assess impact of COVID-19 on land administration and cadastre authorities' service delivery during the pandemic.

33. The FMM funded projects in Latin America and Southern and East Africa to boost livelihoods resilience, response and recovery from COVID-19, with a cumulative budget of USD 1.95 million, providing multi-sectoral approaches to tackle rural poverty in the aftermath of the pandemic and integrate social protection, territorial development and livelihood interventions to support inclusive rural transformation, food security and productive agricultural investments. FAO mobilized USD 12 million to strengthen preparedness and shock responsiveness of social protection systems by linking them to forecasting, anticipatory action and early-response in Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Pakistan, Philippines and Viet Nam.

d) Trade and Food Safety Standards: Facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond

34. Under this priority area, FAO has continued its monitoring and analysis work, with the production and dissemination of information and reports in the form of global public goods. In addition to reporting on markets, the information included national policy developments and measures, enhancing transparency and providing governments and international and national actors with timely and objective analysis and assessments in support of informed decisions and the design of inclusive market and trade strategies and policies.

35. In addition, FAO intensified its analytical work in support of Members' assessments of the impacts of COVID-19 on food and agricultural trade, both globally and at the regional level. Moreover, as part of FAO's regular work, e-training activities continued in the areas of food safety, fisheries and food loss and waste, as well as on the linkages between trade and food security and on agriculture in international trade agreements.

36. Examples of the work include the preparation of a report on the impact of COVID-19 on agri-food trade in the Commonwealth, prepared jointly by FAO and the Commonwealth Secretariat; a synthesis report, in the final stage of publication, based on the assessments conducted at country level in Africa; and training activities in Central America on trade, food security and international trade agreements. In addition, the launch of the African Union (AU) Framework for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT) in Agricultural Commodities and Services in support of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has been followed by dissemination efforts across the continent in collaboration with the AU Secretariat.

37. Several trade-related technical cooperation projects continue to be implemented in all the regions, in close collaboration with the decentralized offices. Further to the information included in the report prepared for the 166th Session of the Council (document CL 166/5), examples include the following projects: digitization and innovation for the competitiveness and sustainability of the agribusiness sector (Trinidad and Tobago); development of policy on cooperatives and study on the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) for mitigation of the COVID-19 impact (Armenia); development of a study on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and food supply chain (Iraq); and economic recovery post COVID-19 and development of sustainable and inclusive markets in priority areas (Central America). It may also be noted that a number of new projects are in the pipeline for finalization and approval. Consultations will continue with the Regional Offices for the identification of other projects, based on needs and assessments.

e) Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery: Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities

38. The priority area "Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery" put particular focus on the livelihood of the most vulnerable and hence at risk, including women, displaced people, and Indigenous Peoples. FAO is committed to build resilience across the humanitarian and development nexus in food crisis contexts, such as Afghanistan, Niger, north east Nigeria, Yemen and Venezuela. In these countries, besides emergency assistance to secure people's access to food, FAO also supported resilience building through support on food diversification and income generating activities

to promote transformative recovery. In particular, due to the need for reliable and timely food security and nutrition information to inform decision-making at the national and governorate levels, FAO and the Government of Yemen, with support from EU, scaled up the geographic coverage of the food security and nutrition information systems (FSNIS) in Yemen to strengthen food security and nutrition information and early warning system.

39. FAO coordinated various technical expertise and experience in supporting communities, countries and regions to enhance the resilience of their livelihoods to COVID-19 and a variety of shocks through combined provision of technical assistance. Evidence-based resilience programmes are delivered at country, regional and global level. To mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods, FAO implemented combined provision of technical assistance (cash interventions, training on agricultural good practices) to vulnerable households such as the women, displaced, returnees, host families, malnourished, handicapped, and Indigenous Peoples (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala). FAO is implementing a joint project with the World Food Programme (WFP) in Lesotho to respond to the impact of COVID-19 and recurrent drought. Besides cash and agriculture interventions, training on protection for returnees is provided.

40. FAO facilitated national and regional institutions to strengthen risk governance under the pillars of building capacities and institutions for resilience. In the Caribbean (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), FAO enables the environment and builds the capacity of national government on emergency preparedness and response to threats and crises through developing and implementing strategic frameworks to address policy gaps and improve sectoral expertise for resilience recovery. In Asia (Bangladesh), in close affiliation with Government's Preparedness and Response Plan (BPRP) call for emergency action, FAO's work contributes to safeguarding people's lives through the improvement of case detections, contact tracing and management and to ensure that food supply chain actors are not at risk of virus transmission. At regional level, combining the technical expertise on emergency response and animal health, FAO supported the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on institutional capacity building to prevent infectious diseases from leading to global health emergencies.

41. In Latin America and the Caribbean Region (Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru), FAO has formulated projects under the lens of gender equality, inclusion and environmental sustainability with harmonized results framework and indicators developed at the overall grant level. The technical support on monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) has been expanded to additional five projects (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan) under the FAO COVID-19 Umbrella Programme for consistent and efficient progress/results monitoring and support FAO's commitment to accountability and organizational learning.

42. Finally, FAO decided to work on a series of resilience indicators for the agri-food systems and has developed a common framework for resilience which looks into resilience: (i) to what (shocks and stresses), (ii) of what (agri-food systems stakeholders), and (iii) for what (improved food security and nutrition and enhanced livelihoods). Resilience is about building capacities and the work implemented builds on the UN resilience framework that identifies five resilience capacities: prevent, anticipate, absorb, adapt and transform. All these capacities are analysed at various levels: national, local, food supply chains, and actors including firms, producers and households, in order to identify and prioritize policies and investments for building agri-food systems resilience. The results of this will be presented at the launch of the State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2021.

f) Preventing the Next Zoonotic Pandemic: Strengthening and extending the One Health approach to avert animal-origin pandemics (PNP)

43. PNP is now firmly incorporated into FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-31 as a key component of the Priority Programme Area on One Health (OH PPA). FAO has developed a multilateral funding mechanism to pool resources and attract partnerships to flexibly support key activities at global, regional and country levels, with Australia having already expressed interest. FAO's OH PPA envisages close collaboration with partners, in particular as part of the Tripartite (with the World Health Organization [WHO] and the World Organisation for Animal Health [OIE]) plus the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This comes with heightened political commitment from the G7, and the G20 deliberations. To support conceptualizing and implementing

the OH PPA, an interdisciplinary One Health Technical Working Group was launched in July 2021 to synergize efforts across the Organization.

44. FAO Early warning system, together with the Tripartite, monitors the global COVID-19 situation at the animal-human interface, sharing information through the Global Early Warning System (GLEWS+), providing updates and conducting risk assessments. Together with UNEP, the Tripartite is committed to enhancing the collaboration for advancing a comprehensive OH approach at all levels. An OH High-Level Expert Panel ([OHHLEP](#)) was launched in May 2021 to provide evidence-based scientific and policy advice to address OH challenges; FAO participates in regular meetings and provides technical inputs as needed.

45. FAO continues participating in OIE and WHO expert groups on SARS-CoV-2 at the animal-human interface, to provide risk assessment, recommendations and guidance to Members on safe trade in animals and animal products, detection of SARS-CoV-2 in animals, virus evolution, and studies to investigate the origins of SARS-CoV-2 or the establishment of new animal hosts. A COVID-19 policy brief, ['Impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of veterinary services and animal disease reporting'](#) was published in July 2021, assessing the pandemic's impacts on national animal health sector capacities. Two FAO guidance documents on SARS-CoV-2 investigations in animals will be published in September 2021 to support field implementation of PNP projects; twenty projects are now actively linked under PNP, across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Near East and North Africa, as well as one global project.

46. With regard to the Regional and country programming, the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) continues implementing FAO's largest OH capacity building program in 36 countries, strengthening countries' capacities to build and manage resilient health systems, with focus on pandemic preparedness and response.

47. FAO is an active player in various OH initiatives launched by the G7 and G20. These include: (i) OH intelligence (OHI) scoping study supported by the G7; (ii) OH global fund; (iii) Tripartite plus Call to Action on OH for the G20; and (iv) input into the planning of the Global Health Summit on 21 May 2021, and related ['Rome Declaration'](#), the Health Ministers' Meeting, 5-6 September 2021, and the Joint Finance and Health Ministers' Meeting, 29-30 September 2021. As current Tripartite Chair, FAO is coordinating the development of a Global Plan of Action for OH with a joint vision for collective action and coalition building, to build back better post COVID-19 but also to reduce the risk of future pandemics.

g) Agri-food Systems Transformation: "Building to transform" during response and recovery

48. Activities under this priority area have transitioned from focusing on mitigating the medium-term impacts of COVID-19 on agri-food systems' actors to a more resolute approach to building back better. Initiatives have also continued to focus on strengthening the long-term institutional strength of public and private sector institutions, and in particular informing national policies and strategies with regular flows of data and analytical reports and technical studies, which have been communicated via regional and national bulletins, training webinars, and conference series. Institutional strengthening and directly building the capacity of value chain actors to build back better has also been core to the delivery of the field programme for the Programme.

49. Collaboration with international and regional organizations, and sister United Nations agencies has continued to play a central role in support to countries' response to building back better, including for instance, an online conference series carried out as part of an agreement between 11 international organizations present in the Latin American region. The result of this work has been better coordinated action on the tailoring of support to governments and agri-food systems stakeholders.

50. Reduction of food loss and waste post-COVID-19 has retained its importance across all regions and in the Latin America Region FAO continues its advisory support to the #SinDesperdicio platform which convenes a range of corporate and advisory partners⁶ around technological innovations.

⁶ IDB, Dow, Nestle, Coca-Cola, Grupo Bimbo, OXXO, IBM, Fundación Femsa; Advisory partners were FAO, World Resources Institute, The Global Food Banking Network, the Consumer Goods Forum

51. With the objective of promoting intra-regional trade, the Central American Integration System (SICA),⁷ that includes FAO, convened three virtual business match-making events with the participation of 1 550 companies, and with the intention of generating regional trade worth USD 50.6 million for building back better.

52. In Africa, support to the field programme has received strong support from a range of donors, including assistance from the FMM for agri-food systems transformation on COVID-19 Response and Recovery. The role of urban-rural agri-food systems in the recovery has also been an important area of focus, including for instance the support to Eswatini focused on stabilizing disruptions from COVID-19 for small-scale agricultural producers, transporters and traders operating in rural, peri-urban and urban agri-food systems. Lessons from these types of initiatives and the various assessments will be discussed among high-level policy makers in a side-event on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition convened by FAO at the upcoming Agriculture Green Revolution Forum 2021 on "Pathways to recovery and resilient food systems".

53. In the Pacific Region building the resilience of value chain actors typically reliant on food imports and tourism from Australia and New Zealand is a priority and action has seen a strong gender focus, with activities enabling actors to identify diversified activities across the agri-food systems. Similarly, in other parts of Asia, for instance in Pakistan, FAO continues its long-standing support to farmer marketing associations on strengthening environmental and inclusive business models in the post-COVID-19 recovery.

54. Overall, action for building agri-food systems back better in the post-COVID period plays a central role across all the Priority Action Areas in the new Strategic Framework, and in particular for: Achieving sustainable urban food systems (Better Life 3); Inclusive rural transformation (Better Life 2), Scaling up investment (Better Life 7) and Reducing food loss and waste (Better Nutrition 4).

III. The Food Coalition

55. Launched in November 2020, the Food Coalition was suggested by the Government of Italy and led by FAO with the aim to create and coordinate a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral mechanism, to mobilize political, financial and technical assistance to address and recover from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

56. The G20 Matera Declaration signed by the G20 Foreign Affairs and Development Ministers and the United Nations agencies in June 2021, included an endorsed paragraph by Members, where the Food Coalition is suggested as a flexible coordination mechanism to provide political leadership. The Matera Declaration further encouraged partners and stakeholders to collaborate with or join this Coalition, whose goal is to build a global alliance to trigger coordinated action in response to COVID-19, with a focus on the thematic priorities identified.

57. The inclusion of the Food Coalition as a flexible coordination mechanism will provide an opportunity to further mobilize G20 and non-G20 countries in support of the most vulnerable and build strategic coalitions across countries as well as with non-State actors around priority areas of work, such as; humanitarian response plan, agri-food systems transformation, economic inclusion and social protection and food loss and waste, in addition to other priorities mentioned under the Declaration such as One Health.

58. In the context of the G20 Call to Action for Food Security at the Ministerial Meetings, FAO had launched an official "Food Coalition - Call for proposals" (closed at the G20 Ministers of Agriculture Meeting on 18 September 2021) and encouraged all Members to join efforts and submit proposals offering their political, financial and technical support in response to needs on the ground. The proposals considered should adhere to the minimum requirements of multilateralism, multi-stakeholder, country owned and thematic focus.

59. A number of interested Members and partners have submitted proposals and taken the steps with the technical support of FAO to build cross-country coalitions. The list of projects including work plan and budget would be presented to Members providing a set of successful examples for

⁷ SECAC, SIECA, IICA and FAO

interested countries to join and advocate for more active involvement of all stakeholders to jointly offer their political, financial and technical support in response to concrete needs on the ground.

IV. Key lessons learned and relevant policy actions

60. Criticality of **robust monitoring systems** for real time data and analysis, including early warning systems, price monitoring and identification of vulnerability hotspots and critical nodes and bottlenecks in agri-food systems as well as risk monitoring and evaluation of actions and policies. The critical aspect in this regard would be proper targeting. FIES data collected before and during COVID-19 has shown that there were significant new hotspots of hunger that the existing listings were not capturing.

61. Creating a strong **link between short-medium and long-term policy decisions** and measures, ensuring that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is inclusive in the national planning and investment, with strong focus on the most vulnerable groups, women, youth and Indigenous Peoples. Emphasis should be given to women as the group hardest hit by the pandemic in the agri-food systems.

62. Significant role of **digital technologies** is proven and universal access to broadband should be promoted.

63. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities highlighting the need for policies and strategies that would **address structural issues related to inequalities**.

64. The pandemic had a significant impact on the middle class because of high level of involvement in informal works and informal economy, and the containment measures have strongly affected their economic activities and income earning. Immediate and concrete responses would be required to ensure their **decent work and economic undertakings in the informal economy**.