

168th Session of the Council

Item 8.2: The outline and roadmap of the “FAO Science and Innovation Strategy”

The FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 identifies science, technology and innovation (STI) as having enormous transformative potential, while also recognizing that STI presents risks. Science underpins all four accelerators (technology, innovation, data, and complements [governance, human capital, and institutions]) of the Strategic Framework and will be integrated into the 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) to maximize FAO's efforts in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and realizing the four betters. To rise to the challenge of harnessing the benefits of science and innovation, FAO must transform itself into a more innovative organization, an organization that is capable of assisting countries to scale up the most appropriate innovations for their contexts, based on science. Therefore, to hone FAO's vision and strategy on science and innovation, FAO's Director-General requested the development of a targeted Strategy to provide guidance, coherence and alignment for impact at country level through better use of science and innovation.

Outline of the Strategy

The FAO Science and Innovation Strategy will be a living document, regularly monitored and periodically updated to reflect important developments. The Strategy will be informed by science and evidence and build on the foundations of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A. Introduction

The introduction will recap the importance of science and innovation for agri-food systems, as well as recalling FAO's role. Relevant global frameworks will be included and their relevance to science and innovation described. Key concepts, including science and innovation, will be clarified.

B. Vision

The vision will be inspired by FAO's comparative advantages and will support FAO's leadership role in providing guidance to countries on science and innovation for agri-food systems through effective communication – both internally and with external partners.

C. Objectives

The following objectives are tentatively proposed:

- a) enhance FAO's technical interventions and normative guidance by translating science and innovation into tools for development, thereby supporting the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2022-31;
- b) strengthen the science- and evidence-base of FAO's technical interventions and normative guidance;
- c) provide guidance, coherence and Organization-wide alignment on science and innovation, cutting across all sectors and components of agri-food systems;
- d) promote access to, affordability and uptake of innovation (including indigenous and local knowledge) in a way that leaves no one behind and ensures the inclusion and participation of marginalized groups, including women, youth, small-scale producers and Indigenous Peoples, in decision making to ensure impacts that benefit them; and
- e) ensure that FAO contributes to relevant regionally and internationally agreed frameworks and that it informs research priorities and agri-food systems policies at country, regional, and global levels.

D. Scope

The Strategy will include indigenous and local knowledge as important sources of innovation. It will consider all types of innovations, i.e. technological, social, policy, financial and institutional. It will also consider operational innovations insofar as they are relevant to the Strategic Framework 2022-31. The full range of scientific disciplines (for example biological, social, behavioral and economic), as well as the importance of inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary research to address systemic challenges in a holistic manner, will be promoted.

E. Theory of change

The theory of change will briefly outline existing challenges and opportunities, provide a vision of the ultimate desired outcomes, and briefly describe the pathways to achieving them while maximising impacts and minimising trade-offs.

F. Guiding principles

A focused number of clear and well-considered guiding principles will ground the Strategy in globally accepted principles, including the five basic principles that underscore the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: the ‘five Ps’: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership.

G. Pillars

The Strategy will be based on pillars that define its thematic/programmatic priorities, including at the global, regional and country levels. They have been defined in the Strategic Framework 2022-31 (including the PPAs, accelerators and cross-cutting themes), the regional priorities, country priorities, normative priorities and other FAO strategies (e.g., on climate change, nutrition, biodiversity mainstreaming, and the private sector). New and emerging issues will be incorporated through foresight exercises. The pillars will cover key issues such as strengthening the evidence base, assessing innovation impacts, assessing and mitigating risks, increasing uptake (adaptation and scaling), identifying and addressing trade-offs, internal (FAO) capacity building, coordination, resource mobilization and partnerships.

H. Action Plan

The Strategy will be complemented by an Action Plan which will be informed by the guiding principles, objectives and pillars. The Action Plan will be aligned with the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme of Work and Budget, and will include a communication plan for both specialized and general public audiences. Development of the Action Plan will be initiated following the endorsement of the Strategy.

I. Accountability framework

The accountability framework will ensure that the Strategy contributes directly to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, linking its monitoring to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the four accelerators of the 20 PPAs. In addition, linkages will be made with relevant SDG targets and indicators. FAO Country Programming Frameworks will indicate country-level results that are related to science and innovation and link them to specific SDG targets and indicators.

J. Roadmap

The Chief Scientist, supported by the Director of the Office of Innovation, will facilitate an inclusive process of engagement for the development of the Strategy, observing the timeline proposed. Consultations with Members will be organized as needed to respond to Members’ queries about the Strategy under the guidance of the Programme Committee and the Council and through regional consultations on science and innovation. A group of external experts, balanced across regions, gender and discipline, will review the draft Strategy before its finalization.

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