

## 168<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council

### Item 5: The Hand-in-Hand Initiative

This summary report responds to requests by the Programme Committee at its 130th Session (CL 166/9) and the Council at its 166th Session (CL 166/REP) to provide regular updates on progress and results achieved in the implementation of the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative. It provides a short synthesis of the Report to the Programme Committee at its 132nd Session and the Council at its 168th Session (CL 168/5). The report builds on information provided in previous reports to the Programme Committee and the Council. Additional information on the Initiative is available on the Hand-in-Hand webpage on FAO's corporate website and on the Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform.

As of 22 October 2021, 45 countries have expressed their desire to participate in the Initiative. These countries include: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Chad, Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tuvalu, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

#### *Conclusions and Lessons from Case Studies*

The Report to the Programme Committee provided synopses of 16 of the most advanced HIH-supported country programmes. A primary conclusion of this review of the experience of these countries is that the HIH Initiative should not be conceived as establishing a programme in its own right, but rather provides an integrated set of powerful supports to nationally defined, led and owned programmes. Rather than speak of HIH programmes, in other words, it is more accurate to speak of HIH-supported programmes.

In the majority of all 45 cases and in the 16 highlighted cases, the supported programmes are not new, but emerge out of existing commitments and national plans. In Ethiopia, for instance, the programme enhances the established national commitment to building agricultural commodity processing zones and agro-industrial parks by strengthening the territorial orientation of the feeder programmes using the updated stochastic profitability frontier analysis developed for the Initiative, by addressing gaps in the linkages of small farmers to the parks, by deepening the analysis of products and markets for the parks, and by supporting the private sector engagement and investment in the parks as complements to public investment.

In Bangladesh and Guatemala, similarly, FAO is working through joint arrangements with the Government to implement large and ambitious agri-food system transformation programmes. In these cases, FAO leadership is recognized through the formalization of FAO's role as co-Chair (Bangladesh) or Secretariat (Guatemala) to a nationally led programme.

#### *Value Addition from the HIH Initiative*

The value addition of the HIH Initiative is clearly visible in all countries as a robust and indispensable support to implementation of scaled-up national programmes. The HIH supports lead to improved focus and location decisions, creates momentum by identifying areas of high agro-economic potential, sharpens the market-orientation of development funding, and improves private sector leveraging of public investment. The HIH also provides key enabling factors, in particular the broad access to FAO technical and policy support that can now be provided through virtual collaborations. The territorial approach and FAO monitoring and evaluation systems create the coherence and resilience among stakeholders needed to ensure sustained action through the many extraordinary challenges that the HIH-supported countries face.

Additional value addition comes in the strengthening of national ownership in several ways. Emerging best practice in governance is the joint leadership of HIH country task teams as soon as practicable, in some instances from the very beginning, as in Bhutan. Close involvement of national agencies in development and implementation of the technical analyses also strengthens national ownership by building up national capacities. Emerging best practice is to ensure that knowledge of all tools, methodologies and platforms is fully transferred to the participating countries as a matter of standard practice.

#### *The HIH Initiative as a Priority Programme Area (PPA) under the new Strategic Framework*

The decision to include the HIH Initiative as a PPA in the new corporate Strategic Framework provides an opportunity to address key institutional issues and opportunities required to regularize the functioning of the initiative. The PPAs do not so much define working programmes, as areas of work where FAO has decided to focus its efforts to ensure excellence in both the technical and operational aspects of functioning. A key objective of the PPA work plans, in other words, is to build organizational capabilities that can then serve as building blocks of more complex programming on the ground.

In this scenario, most PPA teams have been engaged in discussion with the main relevant units (Divisions, Centers, Offices, and Regional and sub-Regional Offices) of the Organization, to determine the level of effort or “contribution” of each unit to the respective PPA. This accounting exercise is essential to resource planning. In the case of the HIH Initiative, however, the positioning of the PPA is qualitatively different on the expectation that the HIH initiative functions as a mechanism for improving the delivery of technical capabilities at country level. In this view, technical units do not so much as “contribute” to the HIH Initiative as see it as a highly effective and efficient channel for bringing FAO’s normative capacities into operational programmes at country level.

The HIH adds value to FAO technical and policy work by providing a platform for combining capabilities and mechanisms for enabling and sustaining integrated policy and technical support services. From a resource accounting perspective it creates efficiencies of scale and scope that enable the Organization to help its Members tackle the more complex programmatic challenges of the 2030 Agenda.

The PPA enables ownership of the HIH PPA, not only by the technical and policy units, the Decentralized Offices, the accelerators and cross-cutting themes, but also by the key operational units, including those responsible for the HIH Geospatial Platform, partnerships, private sector engagement, UN collaboration, and reporting, monitoring and evaluation. The work programme of the PPA will be organized around several areas of work that are needed to complete the repositioning of FAO capabilities, assets and relationships for improved programme effectiveness and efficiency and to scale programme support and impact for the ambitions and requirements of the 2030 Agenda.

The work plan for the HIH PPA will be built around strengthening the five pillars of the HIH Initiative Framework:

- a) The Geospatial Platform and its associated analytical tools (georeferenced welfare and nutrition analysis, HIH typologies, CDMA tools, etc.).
- b) Integration of all agri-food systems dimensions into differentiated strategies based on geospatial analysis and a territorial approach.
- c) Efficient donor and investor matchmaking, to include Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility (GEF) engagements that adopt “global programme” management approaches similar to the HIH Initiative.
- d) Partnerships engagement with key stakeholders, including national producers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), private sector, research institutions, UN agencies, civil society and other non-governmental organizations.

- e) A state-of-the-art monitoring and evaluation system guided by a priority metric, efficient data collection, systems-enabled information-sharing and transparency, quarterly and annual reviews and (near) real-time impact evaluation.

*HIH and Countries in Conflict and Crisis*

An important subset of HIH-supported countries face protracted environmental crises or political conflict, often in combination. In these settings, implementation of HIH support requires a careful balancing of often conflicting humanitarian, development and peace interests. Yet the HIH has the possibility for enabling, stabilizing and sustaining an inclusive and adaptive agri-economic development process that gives diverse stakeholders a common interest in agri-food system development. Working out the short-term strategies for strengthening the development pillar of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus will need to be a high priority in the coming months and years if an exit from recurring crisis and conflict is to be found. To this end, the HIH coordination and PPA teams will work closely with FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) to identify and strengthen essential tools, platforms and partnerships to bridge the humanitarian-development divide.

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