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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Results for FAO in Latin America and the Caribbean region 2020-21

Executive Summary

This document presents major developments and results achieved in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) during the 2020-21 biennium. It also highlights FAO's new ways of working, modalities and initiatives introduced in 2020-21 to contribute to supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the transformation to **MORE** efficient inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment* and a *better life*, leaving no one behind.

The 36th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC 36) requested that the Organization focus its work in the region on the agrifood and nutrition sector, rural populations and sustainable development, while prioritizing strengthened gender approaches, the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent, youth and resilience. FAO addressed the recommendations, achieving significant results in: (i) supporting measures and investments aimed at creating sustainable agrifood systems, with attention to increasing food supply as well as facilitating physical and economic access, information and consumption habits to achieve more nutritious diets; (ii) promoting economic growth and sustainable and resilient production accompanied by social inclusion policies, focusing on eradicating extreme poverty and ending hunger in lagging territories, with emphasis on productive inclusiveness and the creation of new economic opportunities; and (iii) supporting the increased sustainability and resilience to crises of agriculture and agrifood systems, as well as producers, communities and land and sea ecosystems, and supporting Members in accessing financing to address environmental and climate change challenges in the rural sector.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to:

- Take note of the deep transformative actions and modernization undertaken by the Organization since 2019, the key corporate initiatives introduced, and the full alignment of FAO's country-level planning process to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), building on the United Nations Development System (UNDS)

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efforts to collectively support country ownership and address national Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) priorities and gaps.

- Take note of the results achieved in the region in 2020-21 in responding to the priorities and recommendations identified by LARC 36.
- Take note of the USD 420 million mobilized in voluntary contributions, a 78 percent increase compared to the previous biennium, exceeding the target and reflecting Members' and resource partners' confidence in FAO, noting that FAO supported the mobilization of USD 1.7 billion in investments in the region.

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I. Introduction

1. This document presents major developments and results achieved in the region during the 2020-21 biennium. It also highlights FAO's new ways of working, modalities and initiatives introduced in 2020-21 to contribute to supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life*, leaving no one behind.

2. Since the arrival of Director-General QU Dongyu in August 2019, FAO has undergone deep transformative actions to ensure that FAO is fit-for-purpose to face the challenges that lie ahead. FAO has introduced a modular and flexible structure that allows for optimal cross-sectoral collaboration and aims for a stronger and coordinated focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among the changes introduced are: the new Office of Innovation to consolidate and strengthen FAO's innovative spirit; the new Office of SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs¹ to ensure that the special needs of these vulnerable populations and countries are met; the new Office of SDGs which coordinates the corporate engagement in the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review; and FAO's new position of Chief Scientist which ensures robustness, breadth and independence of scientific approaches in FAO's work.

3. The reforms introduced also aimed at modernizing FAO and improving its methods of work and transparency, including through the establishment of the Core Leadership team, comprised of the three Deputy Directors-General, the Chief Economist, the Chief Scientist and the Director of Cabinet.

4. In 2020-21, FAO rapidly transitioned to a fully digital Organization, further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the expanded use of cloud solutions and the introduction of new technologies facilitating the work of the Organization from any location and paving the way for the "new normal". Virtual meetings of the Governing Bodies, including the Regional Conferences in 2020, allowed governance processes to proceed smoothly, with interpretation provided in all FAO languages.

5. Furthermore, during the biennium, a number of key corporate initiatives were introduced, such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, which is FAO's evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development in support of the SDGs, and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme which appeals for immediate-, medium- and longer-term actions to prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis.

6. In 2020-21, FAO fully aligned its country level planning with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) process, thus building on the United Nations Development System (UNDS) efforts to collectively support country ownership and address national

¹ Small Island Developing States (SIDS); Least Developed Countries (LDCs); Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

SDGs priorities and gaps. At the same time, FAO's country level process also contributes to shaping the formulation of the UNSDCF, thus ensuring that agrifood system transformation concerns and related SDGs are well integrated and prioritized in the UN common planning documents.

7. Following the 36th Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean held in 2020, FAO focused its work in the region through the following Regional Initiatives:

- Regional Initiative 1: Sustainable food systems to provide healthy diets for all
- Regional Initiative 2: Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies
- Regional Initiative 3: Sustainable and resilient agriculture

8. These Regional Initiatives served as a mechanism for delivery at country level, facilitating greater impact of FAO's work on the key priorities in each region under the results framework for the biennium as presented in the Updated Results Framework 2020-21.²

9. The next section describes the achievements of the region in 2020-21, focusing on corporate and regional priorities in the context of FAO's work. The section also highlights relevant cross-cutting themes and thematic areas important for ensuring the quality and integrity of FAO's work.

II. Achievements in the region

FAO's new ways of working, modalities and programmes

10. As the Organization shifted towards greater agility and efficiency, the business model in the region underwent important changes. The programmatic approach, focusing FAO's work on strategic policies and programmes, led to outcomes and impacts at a scale consistent with the ambition of the 2030 Agenda. Analytical, technical, policy and investment world-wide assets were leveraged and repositioned to deliver better-targeted and more impactful results in the region as FAO increasingly aimed for interventions with longer-term impact that accelerate rural transformation and sustainable rural development. The priorities identified by the Regional Conference and national governments through the Country Programming Frameworks were addressed through integrated policy, normative, operational and investment support.

Hand-in-Hand Initiative

11. FAO's evidence-based, country-led and country-owned Hand-in-Hand Initiative strives to facilitate agrifood systems transformation and sustainable rural development accelerated through targeting the poorest and the hungry, differentiating territories and strategies and bringing together all relevant dimensions through analysis and partnerships. It offers Members and their development partners a powerful new way of strengthening, expanding and sustaining ambitious national programmes for agrifood systems transformation to achieve SDGs 1, 2 and 10. Launched in July 2020, FAO's Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform is a digital public good to facilitate partnerships, and provide advanced geospatial modelling and analytics, to identify real-time gaps and opportunities to raise the incomes and reduce the inequities and vulnerabilities of rural populations. In LAC, analyses and diagnostics, developed in 2020-21 through sophisticated tools such as geospatial modelling, enabled six countries to identify opportunities for reducing vulnerabilities by raising incomes and to improve targeting and tailoring of policy interventions, innovation, finance and investment and institutional reform.

One Country – One Priority Product (OCOP)

12. The Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products: One Country – One Priority Product (OCOP) launched in 2021 aims to develop sustainable value-chains for Special Agricultural Products (SAPs), support small and family farmers reap the full benefits of a global market, and ultimately help the transformation of agrifood systems and the achievement of the SDGs.

² CL 164/3-WA2 Rev.1 (<https://www.fao.org/3/nd023en/nd023en.pdf>).

It focuses on products with unique qualities in terms of national or cultural heritage, flavour, nutritional content, or production or processing methods, and seeks to address challenges such as natural resource constraints, environmental pollution, ecological degradation, climate change, and the enabling conditions including the regulatory environment. FAO and 11 partners identified opportunities in 11 LAC countries, three of which will be selected for a pilot initiative due to begin in the coming biennium. In collaboration with CIMMYT,³ the Organization is building capacity in the region for applying the IASI⁴ methodology, designed for generating strategies, actions and quantitative SDG-aligned targets to be supported by public and private investments.

Family Farming (FF)

13. FAO has supported family farmers (FF) in incorporating new knowledge, science and technology into the productive systems they manage. The Regional Technical Platform on Family Farming (RTPFF) launched in 2021 in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Rural Forum supports accelerating technical and institutional innovation by providing a digital facility for storing information, know-how and lessons learned from across the world, as well as hosting a forum for collaboration, exchanges, dialogue and learning among governments, farmers' organizations, the scientific community, policy makers, the private sector and other rural development stakeholders.

1 000 Digital Villages Initiative

14. The 1 000 Digital Villages Initiative aims to convert 1 000 villages across the world into digital hubs - with the aim of supporting the transformation of agrifood systems, as well as supporting existing and potential digital villages in their quest to advance and improve livelihoods, agriculture, nutrition, health and wellbeing of their citizens. The Initiative incorporates three main elements: “e-agriculture” to improve agricultural productivity through information and communication technology and digital solutions, such as climate smart, precision and intelligent facility agriculture; “Digital Farmer Services” to enhance farmers’ access to digital services, including financial services, social protection and employment; and digital services for “Rural Transformation”. In LAC, the Initiative was tied to ongoing rural tourism experiences, taking advantage of connectivity, resources and digital solutions for improving the promotion and sales of services and increasing household incomes and employment opportunities.

COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme

15. FAO’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic leveraged the Organization’s convening power, real-time data, early warning systems and technical expertise to direct support where and when it is most needed. The Organization launched the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, which appeals for immediate, medium- and longer-term actions to prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis. It aims to mitigate the immediate impacts while strengthening the longer-term resilience of livelihoods, moving towards a green recovery, and building to transform agrifood systems.

16. In the region, FAO supported Members in keeping agrifood systems functioning efficiently, supporting a coordinated response. Soon after the outbreak, 26 countries signed a Ministerial Declaration committing to keep each other informed on measures implemented and to ensure sufficient, safe and nutritious food supply. In addition, Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture from 34 countries, at three Hemispheric Meetings supported by FAO and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), took the unprecedented initiative of coordinating their actions as an essential element of response and recovery from the pandemic.

17. FAO’s weekly regional COVID-19 newsletter published in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) provided statistics and information to 12 000 readers on the design and implementation of COVID-19 mitigation actions. In addition, governments, technical experts, former Heads of State and ministers exchanged experiences and ideas regarding policy responses and post-COVID-19 recovery with transformation during 27 webinars

³ International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center.

⁴ Integrated Agri-food System Initiative.

reaching over 150 000 people across the region. In cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), FAO generated data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security, livelihoods and market access and convened high-level ministerial meetings and virtual public events to disseminate the evidence. FAO prepared five policy briefs on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition in relation to supply chains, markets, rural youth and digital agriculture, in the context of the CARICOM COVID-19 Response Agri-Food Plan.

18. At national level, 20 countries applied FAO's methodology for remote data collection to rapid assessments, producing information on the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural production and livelihoods. Additionally, four countries developed post-COVID-19 recovery plans with FAO's support, strengthening local production and nutrition and enhancing the participation of the agricultural sector in value chains. In the Caribbean, within the Framework and Plan of Action for the CARICOM COVID-19 Response Agri-Food Plan, nine countries prepared national plans to address potential risks to their food security and nutrition.

19. Members also exchanged experiences on strengthening food delivery initiatives and promoting safe environments for the reopening of schools. The "Joint Strategy for Strengthening School Feeding Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean - safe environment during and post pandemic," with UN and South-South Cooperation partners, delivered hygiene and food preservation kits to 600 schools in 11 countries.

A. Regional Initiatives and key achievements in 2020-21

Regional Initiative 1: Sustainable food systems to provide healthy diets for all

20. FAO supported measures and investments aimed at increasing food supply and facilitating access, information and consumption habits to ensure sufficient healthy, safe, diverse and highly nutritious food, strengthening Members' progress towards SDGs 2, 5, 9, 12 and 14.

21. With FAO's assistance, Members strengthened institutional capacities for food security and nutrition (FSN) legal, policy and programme frameworks and dietary guidelines to address obesity and overweight. Two countries passed FSN laws, while another six countries are drafting FSN legislation, including two in the process of integrating the Right to Food in their legislation at the constitutional level.

22. Governments across the region improved their national school feeding programmes and policies. Eleven countries integrated healthy diet considerations in their programmes, enhanced the governance and operational structures and strengthened links to family and indigenous farming, including through youth- and gender-sensitive approaches, whereas six improved food and nutrition education in schools. Sixteen countries integrated school feeding in their post-COVID-19 recovery plans. Cross-sectoral exchanges between the 21 countries participating in the Sustainable School Feeding Network (RAES) addressed the challenges to school feeding posed by the pandemic, such as the suspension of in-person school attendance.

23. In preparation for the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), national priorities for agrifood systems transformation were identified at over 120 regional, national and subnational multi-stakeholder dialogues convened by 16 governments and facilitated by FAO, contributing to the definition of the national pathways for agrifood systems transformation presented at the Summit.

24. FAO supported the collection, processing, and global dissemination of internationally comparable country data and strengthening national statistics for monitoring SDGs achievements and informing policy and investment decisions at country level. Ten national agricultural census and survey systems in LAC were improved with detailed modules on economic, social and labour sections and cost-effective tools for remote survey implementation such as ICTs (information and communication technology) for administering questionnaires and Global Positioning System (GPS) for area measurement and satellite imagery, addressing barriers to in-person data collection during the pandemic.

25. In the region, ten countries improved monitoring of environmental and food security indicators for SDGs 2, 5 and 15. Four of them have produced data for indicator 5.a.2 on women's rights to agricultural land ownership, and five produced and disseminated data, including baselines, on SDG indicator 12.3.1 on food losses. As a result, by 2021, data availability for SDG indicators under FAO custodianship reached 56 percent in South and Central America, and 40 percent in the Caribbean, with reporting rates expected to increase in 2022-23.

26. Members also improved their capacities for producing high-quality data on FSN. Thirteen LAC countries now measure food insecurity by applying Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) or equivalent scales and two produced data on food processing and small and medium enterprise (SME) participation in the healthy foods supply. In the Caribbean, Members generated and used data in support of policies and programmes addressing food supply and access to healthy and affordable food, especially for vulnerable groups. Nine Caribbean countries improved data collection and analysis capacities on food consumption and imports, and their potential to influence nutrition outcomes.

27. The 13th edition of the Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean⁵ was published in collaboration with IFAD, the World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WFP. The publication analyses the territorial inequality of malnutrition and calls on countries to focus their investments and policies on lagging territories with the worst food and malnutrition indicators.

28. Advances were seen in the development of plans and strategies for addressing Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) to increase food safety and comply with international market standards to enable food exports. Continued situation analyses on AMR provided guidance for National Action Plans and an FAO AMR Reference Centre was designated for the first time in LAC. Eleven countries upgraded food control systems and application of risk-based approaches to align management, inspection and laboratory testing to Codex and international market food safety standards. Four countries improved food safety standards of exportable food products in line with Codex Alimentarius priorities for LAC. Strengthened food safety regulations in six countries are improving food labelling, school feeding and food donation regimes.

29. Innovation and digitalization of 40 wholesale markets across 13 countries provided 20 million families with food at prices that are 10-30 percent lower than local markets. Innovations included e-commerce, price monitoring platforms, circular economy practices, integration of family farming into supply chains, improvement of local market management and promotion of knowledge exchange. Furthermore, nine countries implemented strategies for promoting digital commerce and facilitating the direct purchase of fresh products from family farmers and smallholder producers.

30. The 2nd Food Loss and Waste (FLW) Summit convened by the *#SinDesperdicio* platform provided a forum for sharing innovative policy approaches and private sector strategies for reducing FLW, such as a prototype for a Food Loss Surveillance System applicable to four countries. A new Model Law on FLW, drafted with FAO support, was approved unanimously by the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO), providing Members with a legal reference framework for developing national regulations.

31. FAO supported Members in promoting international agrifood trade. SMEs, cooperatives and family farming organizations participated in online business-to-business roundtables, which leveraged over USD 50 million in business intentions. The Central American regional and national market information networks and systems were strengthened through training, technical assistance and continuous support to SIMMAGRO.⁶ In addition, 20 LAC countries were provided with information on gaps and opportunities for the integration of female entrepreneurs, SMEs, family farmers and cooperatives into international trade value chains, and over 150 public servants and private sector actors from seven Central American countries were trained in Agricultural Trade Policy by FAO, SE-CAC⁷ and SIECA.⁸

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/americas/publicaciones-audio-video/panorama/2020/en/>.

⁶ Market Intelligence and Price Monitoring Regional System.

⁷ Executive Secretary of the Central American Agricultural Council.

⁸ Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration.

32. The Intermediate Cities Network, established by local authorities from over 30 cities in nine countries, provided a forum for integration and learning about the urban food agenda, improving the sustainable governance of agrifood systems in cities to benefit urban consumers. In collaboration with FAO, the alliances formed through the Network generated data, plans and laws for the reduction of FLW, promotion of trade, healthy diets and nutrition security.

33. FAO also promoted food labelling as an effective tool to protect consumer health through permanent private-public dialogues, legal support to food labelling policies, media campaigns in eleven countries and provided evidence that the legal measure does not have negative impacts on employment, salaries or food production.

34. The International Year of Fruits and Vegetables provided a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the important role of these foods for nutrition, food security and health. As the lead agency, FAO promoted national value chain approaches and short fruit and vegetable circuits, assessed government interventions, and increased policy attention in 14 countries towards the nutritional and health benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption, promoting balanced and healthy diets and lifestyles and in reducing FLW. With the support of FAO and PARLATINO, Members promoted healthier food habits through events and information on effective policies for sustainable production and consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Regional Initiative 2: Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies

35. FAO supported Members in reducing rural poverty and revitalizing rural territories, focusing on addressing inequalities and enhancing social protection and productive inclusion, to accelerate progress towards SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 14 and 17.

36. The Central American Integration System (SICA) designed and implemented its Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience Plan for Central America and the Dominican Republic, articulating public sector responses with social, labour and human settlement problems.

37. Ten countries developed strategies and plans to strengthen the link between social protection and economic inclusion, integrating a gender-sensitive and intercultural approach, while seven countries evaluated their social protection programs and the impacts on FSN and rural livelihoods.

38. Five countries in the region are implementing their family farming plans in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDDF), a sub-regional family farming plan is in its final design stage in Central America and the Dominican Republic, and the Andean Community (CAN) defined a joint agenda. In addition, systematized information on political, legal and regulatory initiatives related to family farming in 17 countries has led to governments sharing experiences and coordinating in programme and policy implementation.

39. Through the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, FAO promoted evidence-based, country-led and country-owned acceleration of agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition. By 2021, the six participating LAC countries had updated microregion typology maps and reached different stages of identifying an investment portfolio for priority sectors. To different degrees, governments identified areas of intervention, territorialized commodity value chains and prepared investment portfolios.

40. Technological innovation is critical to achieving prosperous rural societies. The Regional Technical Platform on Family Farming (RTPFF) provides a virtual forum for peer support and entrepreneurship training for producers' organizations, including cooperatives, assessment of difficulties in transition to e-commerce, promotion of rural finance with a special focus on family farming organizations formed by women and young people. The platform also provides a mapping of Latin American public policy instruments related to family farming. In three countries, an application available to young people in rural schools⁹ supports developing communities of knowledge and promoting learning on sustainable management of natural resources in cotton-food consortium systems. In addition, following a successful pilot by FAO and the United Nations Economic

⁹ LazosApp. <https://www.fao.org/americanas/noticias/ver/es/c/1371048/>.

Commission for Europe (UNECE), seven South American countries have access to blockchain technology for ensuring traceability and transparency in family farming's sustainable cotton value chain.

41. In 2020-21, the 1 000 Digital Villages Initiative in LAC¹⁰ supported 48 rural tourism experiences in 13 countries, involving almost 40 municipalities and over 120 rural localities. The aim is to define digital skills and competencies and increase their use, and to enable these experiences to become a “node” for expanding digital technologies to other economic activities.

42. Public-private partnerships in seven countries enabled the adoption of production and distribution technologies by 100 associations, cooperatives and SMEs from the family farming and textile-clothing sectors, strengthening the cotton value chain. Producers from those countries established the Women's Cotton Network in Latin America and the Caribbean,¹¹ a forum for exchanging experiences with the aim of enhancing the value that cotton production adds to agrifood systems.

43. In addition, with FAO assistance, eight countries defined an action plan for implementing technological solutions for land administration, improving land registry surveys and promoting systematic regularization of tenure and the interoperability of land administration systems between different government levels and sectors. Data for indicator 5.a.2 on the right to land from 12 countries allowed formulating recommendations for overcoming challenges in women's land ownership and control. Moreover, approximately 2 000 people from government entities, civil society, academia and the private sector from 31 countries in LAC have strengthened capacity for equitable land governance and social protection with a gender perspective.

44. Gender-oriented policies, programmes and projects were established in the public debate in four countries, with support from FAO in collaboration with the Alliance of Spouses of Heads of State and Representatives (ALMA), public institutions and other partners, while the *#MujeresRurales*, *Mujeres con derechos*¹² campaign became a mechanism for dialogue and advocacy at high political and technical levels during the biennium.

45. Over 5 000 youths from across the world exchanged experiences in adopting sustainable production practices to transform agrifood systems at the First Latin American Festival of Rural Youth¹³ convened by FAO, SICA, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), IFAD, the Special Meeting on Family Farming (REAF) and other partners, leading participating organizations from over 10 countries in the region to establish a forum for dialogue and exchange.

46. FAO's technical report on Forest governance by indigenous and tribal peoples,¹⁴ published in collaboration with FILAC,¹⁵ demonstrates the importance and urgency of climate action to protect the forests of the indigenous and tribal territories of Latin America and provides scientific evidence in support of empowering indigenous and tribal peoples and improving forest governance. The technical report reached over 1.6 million people, thanks to the collaboration of over 75 international organizations.

Regional Initiative 3: Sustainable and resilient agriculture

47. FAO supported Members in using natural resources efficiently, protecting and enhancing ecosystem health and taking climate action to accelerate progress towards SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15, increasing the sustainability and resilience of agrifood systems and of the livelihoods that depend on them.

48. FAO fostered cooperation and coordination for climate action. With the Organization's and ECLAC's support, the 10 members of the Climate Action Platform for Agriculture in Latin America

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/americas/eventos/ver/en/c/1395198>.

¹¹ Red de Mujeres del Algodón en América Latina y el Caribe.

¹² *Rural women, women with rights*.

¹³ <https://www.fao.org/americas/eventos/ver/es/c/1417470/>.

¹⁴ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb2953en/cb2953en.pdf>.

¹⁵ Development Fund for Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

and the Caribbean (PLACA)¹⁶ agreed on a joint work plan, boosting knowledge exchange, public policies, good practices and innovation. In addition, with FAO's assistance, PARLATINO approved the first Model Law on Climate Change and FSN. Adaptable to national legislations, it enables Members to implement policies and strategies on climate change in consideration of the linkage to FSN.

49. The Organization also supported climate mitigation and adaptation. In South America, five countries applied livestock practices and technologies for mitigating the effects of climate change, which, in addition to reducing GHG emissions, generated multiple economic, social, and environmental benefits.

50. Six countries promoted adjustments to their legal and regulatory frameworks to develop more sustainable fishing by approving national management plans, the establishment of working groups, consultative committees and other actions. In addition, officials in charge of fisheries monitoring in ten Central and South American countries improved their capacities for assessing fishery resources and strengthening national monitoring systems. Increased awareness regarding the negative impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture led to actions increasing the resilience of fisherfolk, coastal communities and aquaculturists in seven Caribbean countries, where governments mainstreamed climate change adaptation in multilevel fisheries policies, plans and related processes.

51. In the framework of the Global Blue Growth Initiative, FAO supported capacity building on legal, policy, institutional and operational frameworks to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, including the implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA). By the end of the biennium, one additional country became party to the Agreement and another three countries initiated the process.

52. The Global Soil Partnership (GSP) and the Latin America and the Caribbean Soil Partnership (ASLAC) provided an umbrella for civil servants from 27 countries to strengthen their capacity for digital soil salinity mapping. Thirteen countries generated Soil Salinity maps and Members across the region updated Global Soil Organic Carbon Sequestration Potential Maps (GSOCseq), a knowledge base to foster international cooperation for mitigating climate change and combating food insecurity. Moreover, over 2 000 experts from countries across the region were presented with relevant GSP tools, such as the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM) and the Protocol for the assessment of Sustainable Soil Management.

53. South and Central American countries shifted to more sustainable and resilient water management, to address the complex scarcity scenario, through the implementation of FAO recommendations on water basin governance and related mechanisms.

54. Twelve Central and South American countries increased information and capacity for data collection and analysis on the state of forests in the region, contributing to improving their National Forest Inventories, Satellite Land Monitoring Systems, Greenhouse Gas Inventories and National Forest Monitoring Systems. In addition, the use of remote sensing to report emissions derived from forest degradation and deforestation increased, and three countries updated their forest reference levels for presenting results in reducing emissions from deforestation and REDD+ initiatives. FAO also introduced country profiles in the Global Wildfire Information System (GWIS), providing a starting point for country information on wildfires.

55. The Organization facilitated coordinated actions among Members in favour of integration, effective management, good governance, and local participation in the Protected Areas of the Amazon biome. The Atlas of conservation opportunities in the Amazon biome under climate change considerations provides information for decision-makers and promotes effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), safeguarding livelihoods and biodiversity and contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity targets.

¹⁶ <http://www.fao.org/americas/priorities/sustainable-and-resilient-agriculture/placa/en/>.

56. Five countries applied the Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation¹⁷ developed by FAO and partners within the Agroecology Initiative.¹⁸ PARLATINO's Model Law on Agroecology further supported the transition to more sustainable agrifood systems.

57. FAO's recommendations¹⁹ on actions for reducing risk and mitigating the impact of disasters and formulating early warning and action plans for agricultural drought, promoted increased preparation for addressing disasters. Nine countries strengthened their mechanisms and policy instruments for early warning, anticipatory action and preparedness for threats and hazards that impact agricultural livelihoods and FSN. In the Central American Dry Corridor, three countries assisted by FAO used drought forecasts as a basis for increasing anticipatory actions, such as water harvesting and storage, transformation of agricultural and livestock livelihoods.

58. Six countries strengthened their institutional and technical mechanisms for Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Management (DRM), including governance for addressing hazards and threats and mainstreaming DRM and CCA in their sectoral and development planning frameworks. Increased precision in the estimates of disaster impact supported agricultural disaster risk reduction (DRR) policy and planning and promoted adequate investments in resilient agriculture. Seven countries progressed in institutionalizing FAO's methodology for estimating the economic impact of disaster damages and losses in agriculture.

59. The Organization also provided training and guidelines for Digital Climate Smart Agriculture Tools and Technologies. In the Caribbean, Satellite and Remote Sensing Data supported at-scale agriculture disaster risk forecasting, modelling, and monitoring. Two countries advanced in promoting digital risk modelling, and two others established teams specialized in agriculture drones and geographic information system (GIS) within their ministries of agriculture.

60. Members also increased their ability to act against phytosanitary threats. Twenty-three countries validated a regional strategy and action plan to deal with *Fusarium Tropical Race 4* (TR4) and increased their capacities through national simulations, regional events, trainings and technical exchanges. Public-private sector alliances and dialogues promoted by FAO led to agreements on joint investment priorities to address emergencies such as TR4, locusts, Giant African Snail, citrus Huanglongbing (HLB) and pine bark beetle.

61. FAO supported the protection and rapid recovery of agricultural livelihoods in response to disasters caused by natural hazards, including hurricanes, floods, a volcano eruption and an earthquake, as well as by socioeconomic crises and mixed migration flows. Strategies for rapid recovery and diversification of agricultural production included cash transfers, rehabilitation of water systems, and strengthening school feeding programmes and producers' access to markets.

62. Members prepared for, and responded to, animal diseases and livestock emergencies. International, regional, subregional and national organizations established joint coordination mechanisms for controlling the African swine fever. FAO provided technical support, training, awareness raising, and fostered other sanitary measures focusing on early detection, timely diagnosis and improving response capacity at regional level.

63. In Haiti, adopting the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) strengthened the government's ability to monitor food insecurity levels. Emergency agricultural assistance, such as combining cash transfers with the distribution of agricultural inputs and specialized technical assistance, supported livelihood recovery, strengthened resilience and improved the FSN of vulnerable households.

64. Finally, FAO assisted 24 countries in accessing international climate and environmental funds worth USD 270 million, matched with an additional USD 723.9 million in co-financing. These funds facilitated the implementation of strategies for enhancing the sustainability and resilience of agricultural production and food chains practices.

¹⁷ <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/tools-tape/en/>.

¹⁸ <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/home/en/>.

¹⁹ <http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB0624ES/>.

B. Notable partnerships, innovation and cross-cutting themes

65. Achieving results would not have been possible without collaboration with a broad range of partners. Over 170 institutions in 31 countries participated in South-South and Triangular Cooperation initiatives facilitated by FAO, promoting exchange of knowledge and experience generated within the region on food security and nutrition, agrifood systems, resilience and adaptation to climate change, plant and animal health, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic recovery.

66. Engagement with the private sector was a strategic priority, and the number of formal agreements reached with the business sector increased by 30 percent compared to 2018-19. FAO promoted the private sector's critical role in improving nutrition by sharing successful and innovative business practices for combating malnutrition and supporting dialogue, through which business and civil society representatives issued recommendations for promoting healthy diets.

67. FAO stimulated and enhanced engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs), strengthening relationships and promoting their increased formalization. Central to these efforts was promoting their representation in key policy dialogue mechanisms, such as the national dialogues in preparation for the UN Food Systems Summit to which they were convened and providing a forum for exchanging with other actors on the improvement of agrifood systems and post-COVID-19 recovery. Collaboration with CSOs was also critical to the implementation of the UNDF, ensuring continuity of activities, including through the pandemic.

68. FAO strengthened collaboration with the UN system, in full commitment to the spirit of the UN development system repositioning. The Organization actively contributed to the formulation of all the UNSDCF in LAC, and it is the lead and/or co-lead agency for priority areas within its mandate across the region and continued to implement its work jointly with UN agencies, funds and programmes, including the Rome-based Agencies.

69. The Organization also collaborated with scientific and academic institutions to stimulate research and generate evidence in support of public policies, as well as with UN system agencies.

70. Digital technologies and other forms of innovation offer unique opportunities for the transformation of agrifood systems and the development of rural societies. FAO promoted expanding the use of digital technologies, especially in rural areas, to improve food, nutrition and health, climate resilience, agroecosystems and landscape management, and productivity and non-farm employment. As described above, the Organization leveraged technological innovations and tools such as remote-sensing and satellite imagery, drones, e-commerce, exchange fora, and remote surveys and assessments. The 1 000 Digital Villages in LAC initiative further encouraged bridging the digital divide, and seeks to facilitate partnerships at local, national and global levels.

71. Female farmers and their access to productive resources and services is critical for ensuring the rural sector performs to its full potential, generating significant gains for agriculture, raising the total agricultural output and achieving food security and nutrition for all. In 2020-21, with FAO's support, ten LAC countries developed policies addressing gender equality and 12 applied a gender approach to their strategies for innovative value chains. The Organization also published guidelines strengthening its internal standards for regional reviews and appraisals of gender mainstreaming in project development and built capacity for their application across all country offices in LAC.

72. Agriculture has a critical role in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. Regional platforms such as PLACA strengthened cooperation and coordination on climate action in the agriculture sector. With FAO's support, adaptation and mitigation strategies were integrated across the agriculture sector, and innovative practices and technologies such as GSOCseq and remote sensing were applied to the development of knowledge instruments and to data collection. As described in previous sections, the Organization also supported Members in increasing the degree of ambition of their climate actions – in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – and advocated for linkages between agrifood systems, food security and climate change.

73. FAO continued to support legislative and policy processes by promoting and providing technical assistance to the 25 Parliamentary Fronts Against Hunger (PFH), in addition to contributing to the creation of the first municipal front against hunger in Lima, Peru. As further described above, 14 laws were approved in seven countries and five norms approved by regional Parliaments aim to promote family farming, reduce food loss and waste, regulate food labelling and address climate change, food security and other issues for the implementation of the right to food. In addition, LAC parliaments are discussing over 30 new legislative proposals to contribute to the achievement of SDG 2, Zero Hunger, in the region.

74. FAO mainstreamed nutrition across its programmes by addressing the long-term economic, social and environmental bases of food security and nutrition and supported Members in achieving the nutrition-related goals and commitments defined in the context of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025. Members strengthened their capacities for applying an agrifood systems approach to nutrition actions, such as nutrition-sensitive programmes targeting the vulnerable populations and improving their access to healthy diets as well as promoting healthy diets in their local food systems. Examples include social protection, school food and nutrition, food loss and waste, nutrition education and behaviour change programmes for better nutrition.

C. Improving capacity to serve Members

75. To deliver the regional programme of work in 2020-21, FAO spent USD 78 million in Regular Programme funds (excluding TCP²⁰ projects). Field Programme expenditures reached USD 186 million.

76. Over the course of the biennium, FAO mobilized USD 420 million in voluntary contributions in support of its work in the region, contributed by 40 resource partners,²¹ slightly exceeding the target of USD 415 million.²² This represents an increase of 78 percent (USD 184 million) compared to 2018-19, reflecting Members' and resource partners' confidence in FAO supporting progress towards the 2030 Agenda, as well as the catalytic use of the TCP. By the end of 2021, an additional USD 200 million were in final pipeline stages. The Organization also participated in the design of 14 investment projects in 12 countries in the region, to be funded by international financial institutions (IFIs) for an estimated total of USD 1.7 billion, and supported implementation of 43 additional investment projects financed by IFIs in 20 countries, worth a total of USD 3.8 billion. These investment projects are overwhelmingly implemented through a national execution modality and finance government-led programmes supporting progress towards SDGs.

77. A programmatic approach was implemented by rearticulating the Organization's technical capacity in the region and strengthening operational and administrative capacity at country level. Technical staff came together in thematic multidisciplinary communities of practice for information sharing and knowledge management, which generates a collaborative environment that improves the quality of the technical support provided by participants and facilitates optimization in the use of resources.

78. A newly created digital platform enabled FAO to systematize country-level experiences and best practices, making them available to teams across the region and fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and peer support among FAO Representations. The cross-country synergies and cooperation that emerged not only created a strong virtual workforce, but also helped in managing increased demands within the context of restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

²⁰ Technical Cooperation Programme.

²¹ Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Central Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, European Union, France, Fundación Kielsa, Germany, Global Environmental Facility, Green Climate Fund, Guyana, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Italy, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pan American Health Organization, Panama, Peace Building Fund, Republic of Korea, Spain, Standards and Trade Development Facility in SPS Measures, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Nations Administered Trust Fund, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Office For Project Services, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and World Food Programme.

²² LARC/20/8, para. 3.f. <http://www.fao.org/3/nc566en/nc566en.pdf>.

79. Refocusing the field programme also supported the implementation of a programmatic approach. Revised policies and procedures for project approval reduced fragmentation and increased average project budgets, improving efficiency in formulation, implementation and reporting, and, importantly, ensuring the project portfolio provided greater value-added. Within the Technical Cooperation Programme average project, budgets almost doubled while the overall number of projects practically halved, with all TCP projects strengthening their catalytic purpose.

80. In addition, Country Office functions, structures and processes were thoroughly reviewed to increase flexibility, streamline procedures and improve efficiency and effectiveness of FAO's work at country level. Delegation of authority and accountability increased, in full compliance with requirements for segregating duties within the administrative functions, and competencies were strengthened to fulfil those greater responsibilities. Offices in countries experiencing rapid growth in their project portfolio received special attention, to ensure their operational and administrative capabilities were fit for purpose. Capacity assessments, ensuing roadmaps and dedicated support for addressing bottlenecks led to more efficient procurement processes and increased delivery.

D. Lessons learned

81. The COVID-19 crisis enhanced the digitalization of agrifood systems, as digital services, monitoring, data collection and digital platforms for policy dialogue became the norm. Internally, FAO shifted quickly to digital modalities. Despite these changes, delivery and resources mobilization in LAC increased during the pandemic compared to the previous biennium, highlighting an opportunity that will be fully leveraged during the next biennium.

82. The three Regional Initiatives proved to be solid priority areas and mechanisms for technical support and delivery. They promoted better integration among FAO's technical areas of work and increased focus on supporting countries in addressing priorities defined in the 2030 Agenda.

83. An agrifood systems approach facilitated the assessment of trade-offs among conflicting priorities, identifying opportunities for accomplishing multiple objectives and promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration and policy coordination. In 2022-23, the Organization will deepen this approach, with a view to ensure agrifood systems deliver food security and nutrition for all without compromising the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations.

84. Efficient, innovative, inclusive, sustainable and resilient agricultural practices mitigate the impact of agriculture on climate while providing important short-, medium- and long-term economic and social benefits, key for post-pandemic recovery. In 2022-23, FAO will continue to promote the design and implementation of innovative agrifood systems that enhance ecosystem health and address climate change while sustainably increasing productivity.

85. Promoting inclusive economic growth by reducing inequalities is at the core of FAO's mandate. In 2022-23, these goals will provide focus to all of the Organization's work in the region and guide the identification of priorities and management of trade-offs.