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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

| **Hundred and Thirty-third Session** |
| **Rome, 16-20 May 2022** |
| **Update on the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture** |

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

NI482/e

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

➢ This document is presented to support the Agenda of the 133rd Session of the Programme Committee, which includes an update on the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture.

➢ The document provides an overview and an update on the progress of the key activities towards the establishment of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture.

➢ To fully achieve the objectives of the Platform, more dedicated resources are needed to ensure the composition and operation of the Platform's operating mechanism.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

➢ The Programme Committee is invited to review the updates contained in the document and take note of its key elements.

Draft Advice

The Committee:

➢ noted with appreciation the progress on the activities to establish the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture; and

➢ encouraged strengthened resource mobilization to support the implementation of the operating mechanism of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture.

I. Background

1.   On the basis of a request by the 12th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference in the context of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture ("the GFFA") in 2020, the FAO Council at its 164th Session (6 to 10 July 2020), endorsed the proposal for FAO to host the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture ("the Platform"), and requested a review of its Terms of Reference ("ToRs") by the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the Committee on Forestry (COFO), the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the Programme Committee and the Council.[1]

2.   The ToRs of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture are based on the concept note entitled "*Realizing the potential of digitalization to improve the agri-food system: Proposing a new International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture*"[2] prepared for the 12th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference in the context of the GFFA (2020) by FAO and other international organizations, and feedback provided by the 27th Session of COAG (28 September – 2 October 2020), the 25th Session of COFO (5 – 9 October 2020), the 129th Session of the Programme Committee (9-13 November 2020), the 165th Session of the Council (30 November – 4 December 2020), the 34th Session of COFI (1-5 February 2021), and the 130th Session of the Programme Committee (22-26 March 2021).[3]

3.   The 166th Session of the Council approved the Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, taking into account guidance provided by the Council and the Technical Committees.[4]

4.   The International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture aims at providing an inclusive multi-stakeholder forum to promote dialogue on the digitalization of the food, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and forestry sectors, as well as land use planning and land use change. Its main function is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences on best practices and policy approaches between stakeholders, including Members, agri-business and the private sector, farmers, the civil society, academia and international organizations. Its mission and objectives, as well as the operating mechanism, are detailed in document PC 130/6 *Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture*, considered by the 130th Session of the Programme Committee (22-26 March 2021).

II. The establishment of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture

5.   The Council, at its 166th Session, discussed and approved the Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, taking into consideration guidance from the Council and the Technical Committees, emphasized that the authority to draft the voluntary guidelines should come from Members through FAO Governing Bodies and should be developed by a Member-led, open, transparent and inclusive process.

6.   Upon the endorsement of the ToRs by the 166th Session of the Council, FAO initiated the establishment of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture operating mechanism. To carry out its functions, the Platform will operate based on four mechanisms: the Inter-governmental

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[1] Report of the 164th Session of the FAO Council, 6-10 July 2020, (http://www.fao.org/3/nd238en/nd238en.pdf).
[2] FAO. 2019. Realizing the potential of digitalization to improve the agri-food system: Proposing a new International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture. A concept note. Rome, FAO. (http://www.fao.org/3/ca7485en/ca7485en.pdf).
[3] Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture. 130th Session of the Programme Committee (22-26 March 2021), PC 130/6.
[4] Report of the 166th Session of the FAO Council, 26 April – 1 May 2021. (https://www.fao.org/3/nf693en/nf693en.pdf)

Representatives' Group, the Advisory Committee, the Online Multi-stakeholder Forum, and the Coordination Unit.

7.   FAO commenced the process of creating *The Inter-governmental Representatives' Group*, by requesting the Regional Groups to provide nominees. The Inter-governmental Representatives' Group will be the decision-making component of the Platform and develop a long-term strategic vision and identify issues and priorities in the context of the digitalization of food, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, forestry, and land use planning and land use change. The Inter-governmental Representatives' Group will be composed of 27 senior officers/technical experts of FAO Members.

8.   Furthermore, FAO also hosted multiple meetings with other international organizations that would join the *Advisory Committee*. The Advisory Committee will undertake technical analysis and provide scientific evidence on the effects of digital technologies on food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry and the related challenges, and support the work of the Intergovernmental Representatives' Group.

9.   FAO initiated an informal global stakeholder mapping exercise for supporting the composition of the *Online Multi-stakeholder Forum* and held meetings with partners such as the Digital Agri-Hub (developed by Wageningen University and Research [WUR]) to collaborate on ensuring the inclusion of all stakeholders and their participation in the forthcoming discussions.

III. Summary and way forward

10.   FAO is committed to working with partners to address the considerable challenges of the global agrifood systems. Digital technologies offer unique opportunities for improving food production and trade, especially to smallholder farmers, and in helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture would have significant impacts on increasing the positive benefits of digitalization in the food and agriculture sector, contributing to improving rural livelihoods and local economies.

11.   To fulfill the objectives and finalize the establishment of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, more dedicated resources are needed to maintain the momentum, fund the *Coordination Unit*, and ensure the implementation of the Platform's operating mechanism.