

Web Annex 1:

Digitalization in the Spotlight

Background and Rationale

1. Building on the momentum of the Innovation and Technology Lever, the power of Digital towards assisting immediate global needs and building a better future for our agrifood systems has been further evidenced over the last years. FAO's digital initiatives are tremendously important, for the Organization's mandate and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but it is only by amplifying the awareness on and adoption of innovative digital solutions, policies and practices globally that we will achieve the necessary scale to truly transform agrifood systems. The development of scalable and inclusive fora participation that gather and foster a network of public, private and non-profit organizations committed to responsible digital innovation in agrifood systems represent, therefore, unique opportunities to put a shared vision into practice: ensuring that digital technologies, including emerging trends like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data driven technologies, are used to their fullest potential in agrifood systems to drive and leverage the use of Digital Public Goods (DPGs) in priority areas such as climate, biodiversity, food security, nutrition, with relevant development outcomes, through the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and creating opportunities for enhanced collaborations.

2. Against this background, FAO's "Digital for Impact" focus is on bringing together FAO's digital efforts to further develop new digital capabilities, scale up partnerships and foster advocacy to fully enable the digital transformation of agrifood systems. As the landscape of science, technology and innovation is changing rapidly with amplification of digital tools, big data, and artificial intelligence, public-private partnerships are also on the rise and the importance of the participation of the widest range of actors in agricultural innovation systems is increasingly recognized to co-create knowledge and strengthen capacities. Several opportunities are thus arising where FAO should take bold action by active participation.

3. During the UN General Assembly (UNGA) this year, the SDG Summit is anticipated to take place on 18-19 September at UN Headquarters in New York to follow-up and review the implementation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the 17 SDGs. Immediately before that, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), together with the UN System and Partner2Connect will convene the **SDG Digital Day** in support of the [SDG 2023 Summit](#) at the UNGA high-level week.

4. The UN system is gearing up for next year's Summit of the Future to conclude the [Global Digital Compact](#), as well as embarking on a review of the 20-year implementation process and outcomes following from the original World Summit on the Information Society, and charting the future of the process beyond 2025, showcasing FAO digital capabilities. Agrifood systems transformation, through successful fora participation with the necessary resources allocated, will be an enabling tool and mechanism to activate those leverages at various levels and catalyze opportunities for further partnerships and better coordination of resources in collaboration with key mechanisms.

Examples of actions

5. FAO has been seizing the unique momentum over the last months, capitalizing on days of intensive dialogue, networking and investment-pitching aimed at addressing the current food crisis with new high-impact sustainable digital solutions. The aim of fora participation in this context is to promote constructive dialogue and exchanges of best practices to enhance the undeniable potential of digital technologies for the agriculture of the future and to mobilize new commitments for the SDGs supported by Data and Digital.

6. Through an emphasis on science, technology and innovation, FAO participation in the upcoming fora offer the Organization an international and inclusive platform towards tangible impact, and spark discussions on the transformation and modernization of agrifood systems by showcasing

concrete examples of digital technologies that are accelerating the achievement of the SDGs and the FAO *four betters*, so as to take them to the next level.

7. Most recent example: Since its foundation twenty years ago, FAO is actively engaging in the [World Summit of the Information Society \(WSIS\) Forum](#), facilitating Action Line C7 on e-agriculture and each year, organizing a thematic session with other agencies, partners, and contributors, aligned with the overall common goal of embedding Digital Innovation as a key component to common efforts and policies for agrifood systems, leaving no one behind. This year FAO led '[Digital in Action- AgriFood Systems Transformation for SDGs Achievement](#)' and through the Organization's participation also in the High-level track with the Director-General's intervention and in the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), FAO had the opportunity to present a leadership role on how technology is harnessing digital for impact and identified further opportunities, aligning within the UN ecosystem to integrate information and communication technologies (ICTs) into a joint approach for implementing the activities/initiatives to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Objectives

8. Encouraging more interactive and engaged fora participation as well as seeking concrete outputs and results in terms of collaboration post these events, is critical to raise further awareness on the key role of FAO's leadership in digital transformation of agrifood systems, and drive/attract resource mobilization, highlighting the crucial potential of developing new digital capabilities and partnerships towards accelerating the *four betters* and the 2030 Agenda implementation.

9. The following outcomes are to be pursued:

- a) Foster FAO global leadership position and external image of a digital innovator and leader in digital transformation of agrifood systems, with positive impact on rural transformation through its focus on Digital for Impact, at the national, sub/regional and global levels, through its own digital capabilities and the *four betters* of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, and aligned with the UN system and beyond, contributing immediately to upcoming initiatives at the global level in the coming months, including the UN Common Blueprint for Digital Transformation, the Global Digital Compact, and our Common Agenda.
- b) Position FAO as a leader in the UN context of digital transformation, directly contributing to the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the Common Blueprint for Digital Transformation, by integrating FAO strategies and substantive knowledge in implementing digital transformation and propose ways to accelerate the implementation of Digital Cooperation towards the Summit of the Future.
- c) Reinforce the Organization's commitment to ensure FAO use of digital technologies plays its essential part — helping to drive progress on the sustainable development agenda and marking progress on the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation implementation as well as participation in UN mechanisms (UNGIS, WSIS Beyond 2025, Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), HCLP, GDC).
- d) Discuss opportunities to connect the dots and scale-up transformation and enable investments via use of Digital Public Goods to address Members' challenges, especially for agrifood systems in low and middle-income countries through joint collaborations that take advantage of new insights with digital capabilities towards targeted interventions.
- e) From the interest generated by FAO opportunities presented at the fora, attract more funding and resources in the short-, middle- and long-term from potential partners to further strengthen and build on existing FAO digital capabilities and Digital Public Goods contributing to the achievement of the SDGs, firmly supporting FAO's leadership position in the agro-informatics field at the global level.