

174th Session of the Council

Item 7: Update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative

FAO appreciates the United States of America's acknowledgement of transparency and regular updates on the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative, which are regularly provided to Members. We recognize that the current HIH Dashboard has been limited, and the Organization is trying to expand its scope and functionality to include commitments, progress and ongoing negotiations on investments. Within the available limited resources, we are working on an upgraded version of the Dashboard.

FAO appreciates the positive feedback from Costa Rica, and the Organization will continue providing support to all Members based on their needs and demands. FAO will continue to support Members with a range of innovative platform, tools and approaches of Hand-in-Hand, including both at national and also at regional Initiative level such as for the Dry Corridor, in which Costa Rica is participating. FAO is pleased to note the high-level ownership of the Central American Integration System (SICA) Secretariats and Councils leading the process.

FAO welcomes the positive feedback from Colombia on the support provided by the HIH Initiative with focus on further development of the dairy value chain, and particularly highlighting, "The Hand-in-Hand Initiative is therefore a very valuable tool for speeding up the transformation of this sector, as well as for eradicating poverty and ending hunger and malnutrition in the country." We also note the specific interest of Colombia in engaging investments under the HIH and will continue to support engagements on investments for Colombia through the online Matchmaking App, which is now open all year round.

FAO appreciates the positive feedback provided by the European Union (EU) and its 27 Member States, takes note of the acknowledgement of the ongoing interest in HIH from Members as reflected in the increased membership. HIH now has 68 Members with Mongolia, which joined in November 2023. Regarding ensuring coherence with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), at country level and through the FAO Representative on the ground, closer coordination with the relevant UN agencies and alignment with a joint country programming are pursued.

FAO takes note of the European Union's acknowledgement of the need to further develop HIH data and tools for HIH Members. This is an area where engagement by FAO with EU data sources and standards is being explored (e.g. from the European Space Agency and possibly the Joint Research Centre). Further collaboration and support on improved data and mapping with these leading EU Institutions would be welcome.

To support the government-owned and -led approach of HIH, FAO has included the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment as one of the key references for the HIH Investment Forum. FAO will continue to provide regular updates on HIH to FAO Council as advised, including on the reporting of ongoing negotiations and commitments related to the HIH Investment Forum through the HIH Dashboard, which is being upgraded.

FAO appreciates the positive feedback and recent engagement of Australia at the HIH Investment Forum 2023. FAO is planning a subregional training on HIH Geospatial Platform in the first quarter of 2024 for the Pacific Islands (provisionally planned in Fiji), and the support of Australia for this planned capacity development efforts would be appreciated.

The Hand-in-Hand team continues its engagement and corporate efforts across a number of related Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), including on Scaling up investment and also on Reducing food loss and waste – often mentioned in the investment plans of the HIH Members when presented at the HIH Investment Forum in Rome. This includes support to the Subregional and Regional Offices in utilizing data sources and investments identified under HIH when preparing for climate financing for large investment programmes such as for the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Fund, which are

of growing importance for the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) governments.

FAO takes note of Australia's suggestion to enhance the HIH Dashboard and, within the available resources, is working to improve the user experience, as well as enhance the visibility of HIH outcomes.

FAO appreciates the positive feedback from the Government of Chile on HIH and the interest and recognition of the opportunities that HIH offers for Member governments to highlight agrifood investments for the transformation of agrifood systems for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

FAO welcomes the interest of the Government of Chile to use the HIH approach, tools and processes in its efforts in close consultation with the national Office of Agricultural Studies and Policies. FAO looks forward to taking this cooperation forward, possibly through a pilot project on Hand-in-Hand in the country, to be developed with the Government, in close consultation with the FAO Representation in Santiago, Chile.