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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

Thirty-third Session

Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco, 26-28 March 2024 and 18-20 April 2024

**The Regional Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Forum dialogue with
partners**

Executive Summary

[The Hand-in-Hand \(HIH\) Initiative](#) targets the poorest, the least developed landlocked countries, least developed small island states, countries in food crises and large countries with significant hotspots of poverty. It supports the implementation of nationally led, evidence-based investment programmes to accelerate resilient agrifood systems and inclusive rural transformations, by eradicating poverty (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 1), ending hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2) and reducing inequalities (SDG 10).

It uses advanced geospatial modelling and analytics, as well as a robust partnership-building approach to accelerate the market-based transformation of agrifood systems – to raise incomes, improve the nutritional status and well-being of poor and vulnerable populations, and strengthen resilience to climate change.

Since its launch by the Director-General of FAO in October 2019, the number of Members in Africa joining the Initiative expanded to 37 countries, and FAO's support to the Members also increased to more than USD 8 million in undertaking analytic studies and catalysing/matchmaking key investments mainly through Technical Cooperation Programmes.

At the two rounds of the HIH Investment Forum, held in [2022](#) and in [2023](#), at FAO headquarters in Rome, so far, a total of 18 countries and one Regional Initiative for the Sahel developed and presented the respective investment plans worth more than USD 12 billion.

The objective of this special event is to provide a platform for Members to share and learn good practices and lessons learned, as well as to facilitate dialogue with partners on how to enhance the business model and private sector engagement.

The expected outcomes are to empower Members, share peer-to-peer experience, learn best practices, and discuss and identify gaps and improvements to shape the future HIH Initiative business model.

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I. Background

1. [The Hand-in-Hand \(HIH\) Initiative](#) targets the poorest, the least developed landlocked countries, least developed small island developing states, countries in food crises and large countries with significant hotspots of poverty. It supports the implementation of country led and country driven, ambitious programmes to accelerate resilient agrifood systems and inclusive rural transformations, by eradicating poverty (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 1), ending hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2) and reducing inequalities (SDG 10).
2. It uses advanced geospatial modelling and analytics such as the Geospatial Platform (<https://www.fao.org/hih-geospatial-platform/en/>) and the [Data Lab for Statistical Innovation](#), as well as typology analysis using Stochastic Frontier Analysis to provide high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable data assisting countries and investors' informed, strategic decision-making and evidence-based policies. It also uses a robust partnership-building approach to accelerate the market-based transformation of agrifood systems – to raise incomes, improve the nutritional status and well-being of poor and vulnerable populations, and strengthen resilience to climate change.
3. The number of member countries in Africa which joined the HIH Initiative increased and expanded from 25 countries during the previous 2020-2021 biennium to 37 countries during the last 2022-2023 biennium.
4. In parallel, in the same period, FAO's support in Africa in undertaking analytic studies and catalysing/matchmaking key investments through Technical Cooperation Programmes also increased from nearly USD 5 million for 15 countries to more than USD 8 million for 22 countries.
5. At the two HIH Investment Fora, held in [2022](#) and in [2023](#), at FAO headquarters in Rome, a total of 18 countries and one Regional Initiative for the Sahel presented the respective investment plans worth more than USD 12 billion, which triggered some bilateral follow-up dialogues with partners and potential investors.
6. Furthermore, some countries such as Mali and Zimbabwe organized national HIH Investment Fora aimed at facilitating public and private investment through matchmaking, which were followed by other countries, such as Malawi and Rwanda. In addition, an online Africa regional HIH Investment Forum was successfully organized to further accelerate efforts to foster matchmaking and facilitate investment, as well as to promote peer-to-peer exchange, and sharing and learning among Members at the regional level.
7. Some positive outcomes emerged in terms of partnerships-building and mobilization of resources, and investment in some countries, which will be shared during the session. It comes at a critical juncture, in a bold shift from diagnostic to investment towards agrifood systems transformation in Africa.
8. At this critical juncture, it is essential to take stock of the progress made so far, to share and learn good practices and lessons learned among Members, as well as to facilitate dialogue with the private sector and partners.

II. Objectives of the Session

9. The event will provide a platform for Members to take stock of the progress made so far, to share and learn good practices and lessons learned as well as to facilitate dialogue with partners on how to enhance the business model and private sector engagement.

III. Expected Outcomes

10. The event aims at empowering Members, sharing peer-to-peer experience, learning best practices, and discussing and identifying gaps and improvements to shape the future HIH Initiative business model.

IV. Target audience / Participants

11. The target audience includes Members, the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, United Nations Agencies, funds and programmes, development partners, international financial institutions, the private sector (international non-governmental organization), civil society organizations, producers organizations, academia/research institutions and relevant stakeholders contributing to resilient agrifood systems and inclusive rural transformation in Africa.

V. Agenda

| Activity | Who | Time |
|---|---|-------------|
| Introductory video about the Hand-in-Hand Initiative | FAO | 5 minutes |
| Welcome Remarks | FAO Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative (ADG/RR) for Africa | 5 minutes |
| Opening Remarks | H.E. African Union Commissioner, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) | 5 minutes |
| An update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and the Investment Forum 2023 | FAO Chief Economist | 10 minutes |
| Roundtable 1: Country experience sharing – from diagnostic to investment | Ministers Moderator: FAO Special Advisor to the ADG/RR | 30 minutes |
| Roundtable 2: Perspectives from Investors and Partners – from diagnostic to investment | Representatives of the investors and partners Moderator: FAO Regional Programme Leader for Africa or Director of the FAO Investment Centre | 30 minutes |
| Q&A session and open discussion | All participants | 30 minutes |
| Closing remarks | FAO ADG/RR for Africa | 5 minutes |