



# Hand-in-Hand: Targeted investments for sustainable agricultural development



Hand-in-Hand marks FAO's renewed desire to promote market-based transformation of agrifood systems.  
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## Unlocking agriculture's development potential

Investment in agriculture catalyses sustainable development. From opening up new markets for smallholders to funding climate-resilient infrastructure, market-based transformation of agrifood systems can help boost economic growth, improve food security and nutrition, and champion equality, especially for the world's poorest.

Low-income, low-capacity countries are rich in agricultural investment and development opportunities. All too often, however, donors and the private sector struggle to find the reliable data and expert insight required to invest confidently in these countries. National governments, meanwhile, frequently lack the partnerships with donors and development agencies needed to implement national agricultural strategies and investment plans.

## How Hand-in-Hand works

Hand-in-Hand is a flagship FAO initiative designed to remove these barriers to agricultural development. It provides the support and data needed to enable governments, donors and the private sector to more precisely target agricultural investments and policies for resilient, sustainable and productive agrifood systems. In this way, Hand-in-Hand supports the acceleration of agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty (SDG1), end hunger and malnutrition (SDG2) and reduce inequalities (SDG10). The initiative prioritizes countries and territories where poverty and hunger are highest, national capacities are limited, or operational difficulties are greatest due to natural or human crises.

### Data-driven decisions

Hand-in-Hand provides all stakeholders with access to its Geospatial Platform: a comprehensive, open-access database of validated geospatial, biophysical and socioeconomic data covering 245 countries and territories from 1961 to the present day. With over 2 million data layers, as well as advanced modelling and analytics functionality, the Geospatial Platform serves as Hand-in-Hand's key enabling tool – allowing governments, donors and the private sector to identify territories where agricultural investment has the greatest potential to alleviate poverty and hunger.





Hand-in-Hand aims to remove the barriers to agricultural investment in low-income, low-capacity countries.  
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### Productive partnerships

Once development opportunities have been identified, Hand-in-Hand facilitates government efforts to engage with donors and development partners to implement investments and interventions in targeted territories as part of broader national agricultural strategies. Hand-in-Hand's matchmaking service brings together national and local authorities, donors, international financial institutions, private enterprises, producer organizations, civil society organizations and research institutions to operationalize these investments. Partners are chosen for their ability to implement identified interventions – whether through technology, data, capacity development or financing.

### Effective programme governance

After investment plans have been agreed, Hand-in-Hand's country task force provides continuing support to ensure that the highest levels of leadership and transparency are maintained throughout the development and implementation of even the most complex programmes. Hand-in-Hand's Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard allows programme partners to share information, track commitments and make timely adjustments as circumstances change or new information becomes available.

## Why work with Hand-in-Hand?

### National governments

Hand-in-Hand has been developed with the needs of governments at its core. The data, technical support and capacity strengthening it provides allow national policymakers to make more informed, evidence-based decisions, maximizing the development potential of agricultural policies. Its matchmaking service forges effective partnerships between governments, donors and the private sector to realize this potential in a way that reflects the interests, needs, opportunities and national priorities identified by governments. Most importantly, Hand-in-Hand remains a country-led initiative. National governments decide who to work with and how programmes should be implemented. This unique approach makes Hand-in-Hand the first United Nations initiative to facilitate funding for agricultural development without stipulating how those funds should be spent.

### Multilateral development banks and donors

By supporting programmes facilitated by Hand-in-Hand, donors and international financial institutions know they are joining responsibly governed, data-driven investments designed to maximize positive impacts in territories specially chosen for their development potential. These impacts include not only economic growth but advancing social and environmental goals, with a particular focus on alleviating poverty and hunger. Planned interventions include developing value chains for priority commodities, introducing digital services and precision agriculture, reducing food losses and waste, building efficient water management systems, and addressing climate challenges and weather risks faced by smallholders.

### Private sector

Hand-in-Hand marks FAO's renewed desire to work closely with the private sector to promote market-based transformation of agrifood systems. Through its Geospatial Platform and matchmaking service, Hand-in-Hand provides agribusinesses with the data, connections and expert insight needed to make informed investments in low-income, low-capacity countries – opening up markets that were previously inaccessible or prohibitively risky. For companies concerned with their social and environmental impact, Hand-in-Hand can help them get advice on the business models and investment decisions that will strengthen the equity, resilience and sustainability of their value chains.



Visit the Hand-in-Hand website for more information:

<https://www.fao.org/hand-in-hand/en>

Access millions of data layers on the Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform:

<https://www.fao.org/hih-geospatial-platform/en>

Want to find out more about the initiative?

Contact the Hand-in-Hand team: [hih-investment-forum@fao.org](mailto:hih-investment-forum@fao.org)