



**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2022

African countries, LDCs and LLDCs – Ensuring equal access to vaccines and resources in the poorest countries

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***Statement by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations,
Mr. Lucas Tavares, Senior Liaison officer of the FAO Liaison Office with the UN in New York***

1. I would like to bring into the discussion the issues of food security, nutrition and agrifood systems, given their importance to African countries, LDCs and LLDCs. Ending hunger and malnutrition was already one of the greatest challenges we faced even before the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The pandemic made matters worse. It continues to expose weaknesses in our agrifood systems, which threaten the lives and livelihoods of people around the world, particularly the most vulnerable and those living in fragile contexts. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022 released today estimates that up to 828 million people in the world faced hunger in 2021 – 150 million more since the start of the pandemic. Africa is the region with the greatest prevalence of undernourishment, at around 20%. Meanwhile 23% of the population in LDCs and 21% in LLDCs are undernourished.
3. The high cost of healthy diets and persistently high levels of poverty and income inequality continue to keep healthy diets out of reach for almost 3.1 billion people. No region of the world or group of countries has been spared.
4. Households in the African region spend on average about 23% of their incomes on food. with the LDCs in the region spending on average 33%. The high share of total income spent on food makes the region particularly vulnerable to the high food prices projected in the short term and this will have a significant impact on economic welfare, food security and nutritional diversity.
5. According to the latest FAO/WFP Hunger Hotspots report (June 2022), six of the top ten countries most affected by acute food insecurity are in Africa; and eight of them are LDCs and/or LLDCs.
6. Investing in youth, women, reinforcing partnerships, bridging the digital gap, and increasing financing have been mentioned as key areas of focus for LDCs, LLDCs, and African countries. They are also central to agrifood systems transformation in these countries because of the importance of the food and agriculture sector in many of their economies. As such, they are also integral to the efforts that FAO is

putting in place to strengthen support to LDCs and LLDCs including through the establishment of an Office of SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs the implementation of its Strategic Framework (focussing on better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind) and through targeted initiatives such as the One Country One Priority Product, 1000 Digital Villages, Green Cities and the Hand- in-Hand Initiative.

7. “Hand-in-Hand” aims at accelerating agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to end poverty, hunger and malnutrition, through plans designed and owned by countries, incentivizing partnerships, using a matchmaking approach and leveraging digital tools. The Initiative builds on state-of-the-art tools, including the Hand in Hand Geospatial Platform, the Data Lab for statistical innovation and Big Data tools like Earth Map. Over 50 countries have started rolling out the initiative, most of them LDCs, LLDCs or from Africa.
8. The war in Ukraine worsens what was already a difficult global food security situation, with the uncertainties it creates on agricultural production and trade and the impact on food prices which could lead to an increase in the number of undernourished people up to 13 million in 2022.
9. As part of the response, FAO recently launched a call for a global Food Import Financing Facility (FIFF) to help countries that are vulnerable to shocks and stressors deal with surging food prices as a result of the war in Ukraine. The FIFF, which is also aimed at increasing global agricultural production and productivity in a sustainable way, is one of six policy proposals put together by FAO in response to the crisis generated by the war. The facility would provide these countries with financial resources to help cover the increase in their food import bill in 2022.
10. The FIFF seeks to complement existing mechanisms within the UN system and is proposed to be strictly based on urgent needs. Of the 62 prospective countries, most are LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.
11. At an assumed discount rate of 4 percent over the average commercial interest rate and a maximum credit volume of USD 25 billion, the net annual funding costs would amount to USD 1 billion. To cover the most immediate needs, offering financing for just 25 percent of the current import costs, a funding volume of USD 6.2 billion would be required.
12. In conclusion, FAO reconfirms its support to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs and Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs is confident that the Programmes will ensure sustainable and resilient development in the respective countries.