



## High Level Political Forum 2021

6-15 July 2021

*“Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”*

### ANNEX 1

#### **Inputs by the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG)**

The Committee on Agriculture (COAG) is FAO’s main technical advisory committee on agriculture. COAG provides overall policy and regulatory guidance on issues relating to agriculture, livestock, food safety, nutrition, rural development and natural resource management, and is responsible for: i) reviewing major agricultural and nutritional problems and proposing concerted action by FAO’s Member Nations and the Organization; ii) advising the FAO Council on activities relating to agriculture, livestock, food, nutrition and natural resource management, with particular emphasis on all the social, technical, economic, institutional and structural aspects relating to agricultural and rural development in general.

The biennial sessions of COAG bring together its Member Nations, and other international and non-governmental organizations, to identify emerging policy and technical issues, to seek solutions and to advise on appropriate action. COAG has aligned its agenda towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on actions to accelerate and scale-up progress, especially to achieve SDG 2 and other related SDGs. COAG increasingly addresses interdisciplinary topics, reflecting the crosscutting nature of major global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, food system issues, biodiversity, innovation, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and others emerging issues.

The 27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG 27), held from 28 September to 2 October 2020<sup>1</sup>, discussed as main theme the importance of the livestock sector contributions to achieving the SDGs and FAO’s work in enhancing the sector’s contributions to food security, sustainable food systems, nutrition and healthy diets. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, COAG 27 advised on the impact of pandemic on food security and nutrition, and food systems, with particular attention to the most disadvantaged groups, ensuring that no one is left behind, and the key responses to address these impacts.

#### **Suggested outline<sup>2</sup>**

- a. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the interlinkages with other SDGs**

<sup>1</sup> C 2021/21

<sup>2</sup> The headings and bullets are included as per the suggested outline annexed to the letter of the President of ECOSOC.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, hunger continued to increase with almost 690 million people still undernourished worldwide, showing an increase in hunger since 2014; 2 billion people did not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food; and 3 billion people could not afford healthy diets. This is exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may add up to 132 million people in 2020 as per ‘The **State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020**’<sup>3</sup> estimates. Food systems directly employ over one billion people, and provide livelihoods to another 3.5 billion. COVID-19 mitigation and control measures and the emerging recession are having a profound economic impact putting the jobs and livelihood of millions at risk, that could disrupt the incomes and, by extension, food access<sup>4</sup>. Without interventions to save lives and restore livelihoods, the number of hungry people could grow, especially with the pandemic expanding well into 2021.

Smallholder farmers and their families, food workers in all sectors, are particularly vulnerable. The challenge of food security continues to be one of access to food, rather than availability of food. Food markets continue to face uncertainties due to prospects of weak economic growth and unstable energy and currency markets. A major increase in acute and chronic food insecurity and malnutrition has already been observed. Still, near-term prospects point to generally well-supplied food markets at global level<sup>5</sup>.

Equally urgent is the need to address the compounding threat of the pandemic on existing crises - such as conflict, natural disasters, climate change, pests and plagues - that are already stressing food systems and triggering food insecurity around the globe, and threatening progress in achieving the SDGs. Beyond the response to the current pandemic and mitigation efforts, agriculture can be a driver of rapid, inclusive recovery and should be made more resilient to future shocks.

During its 27th Session, the Committee stressed the need to ensure access to food and to that end it highlighted the relevance of international trade in the context of an open, rules-based, science and evidence based, predictable, non-discriminatory, and fair multi-lateral trade system, consistent with WTO rules. The Committee further emphasized the role and relevance of national and regional trade in access to food.

To proactively and sustainably address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, FAO has launched a comprehensive **COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme** (details in section d).

**b. Actions, policy guidance, progress, challenges and areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the SDGs and to the theme within the area under the purview of your intergovernmental body**

In its 27th Session, the Committee on Agriculture, recognized the significance of **sustainable food systems** in achieving the 2030 Agenda and of the coordination of all stakeholders in **adopting a food systems approach**, stressing the added urgency in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. COAG 27 requested FAO to continue supporting Members in developing sustainable food systems, including through such mechanisms as the 10YFP Sustainable Food Systems Programme, and to continue to provide full support to the preparatory process towards the **2021 UN Food Systems Summit**.

COAG noted with satisfaction the comprehensive nature of the updated **Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition**, with the central role of healthy diets to be achieved through a food system approach, to address the global challenge of malnutrition, particularly in the most vulnerable. COAG called for FAO to support the development and implementation of policy on nutrition and food safety at national and regional levels, noting the importance of sufficient data on diets and the affordability of nutritious food. COAG emphasized the need for FAO’s new **Food Safety Strategy** to serve as an **international guidance, policy and advocacy instrument** for decision-makers to encourage increased investments and the integration of food safety into the development of sustainable food systems. The Committee also encouraged FAO to include an approach in the new Strategy that assists countries in the implementation of the current instruments that exist to strengthen national food control systems. COAG recognized the importance of the joint work of FAO and WHO and

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<sup>3</sup> SOFI, 2020. <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2020/en/>

<sup>4</sup> UN Policy Brief, 2020. [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_covid\\_impact\\_on\\_food\\_security.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_food_security.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/ne124en/ne124en.pdf>

requested to ensure that their respective food safety strategies are aligned and mutually supportive, following the One Health approach and taking into consideration the public health impact and global recession of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee acknowledged **FAO's Urban Food Agenda**, and asked to increase the focus on small and medium-sized cities, given their role in catalyzing the functional territorial dynamics in promoting sustainable agricultural transformation, while continuing to address challenges existing in larger cities, and to include the Urban Food Agenda in the lead up process towards the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021. COAG requested to provide support to governments in adopting the Urban Food Agenda as well as to multi-stakeholder coordination between national and local/urban authorities.

**c. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global, regional and national levels against of background of the COVID-19 pandemic in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, within the respective area addressed by your intergovernmental bodies**

COAG expressed particular concern for the lives, livelihoods and nutritional status of those who are least able to cope with the **impacts of the COVID-19 crisis**, and for maintaining the functioning of food value chains and keeping markets open, and requested FAO to assess the specific impacts on women, youth, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, smallholders and family farmers and those exposed to conflict and protracted crisis and to recommend measures to ensure that no countries and no persons are left behind. It invited to increase information sharing on country experiences in containing COVID-19 and its health, economic and social impacts, and assess the diverse measures taken.

COAG stressed the key role of indigenous peoples as protectors of biodiversity and knowledge holders about natural resource management, innovations and food systems and acknowledged the gaps and challenges faced by indigenous peoples on food security, access to health and education further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. COAG welcomed the launch of the **Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems** to support an exchange of knowledge between indigenous peoples and scientists to ensure the protection and preservation of indigenous food systems in the context of United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 and in other frameworks.

The Committee endorsed FAO's **Rural Youth Action Plan**, to promote the revitalization of rural areas to ensure present and future generations can contribute to food production and ensure youth participation in sustainable development, in collaboration with relevant organizations and initiatives. The Plan aims to address the needs of vulnerable persons and prioritize areas such as youth empowerment, youth employment, all types of education, and promote strategies for enabling decent work for rural youth and propose alternative solutions to migration, and consider the needed recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

COAG emphasized the importance of **enabling smallholders and family farmers** to access and participate in appropriate innovation, information and advisory services for sustainable agrifood systems, and recommended to FAO to enhance its strategic guidance and its technical support to Members in improving demand-driven innovation, information and advisory services, for bridging the gap between information generation and use by smallholders and family farmers as well as other vulnerable groups, and highlighted the critical role played by the Extension and Advisory Services in providing support to smallholder family farmers, especially women, youth and other vulnerable groups.

COAG endorsed FAO's “**Global Programme on Sustainable Dryland Agriculture**”, and called for partnership with countries with relevant technical experience to ensure sustainable agriculture and sustainable rural development of drylands as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation, addressing water scarcity

**d. Cooperation, measures and commitments at all levels in promoting sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic**

FAO is continuously assessing the pandemic's evolving impact on food security and nutrition and is providing evidence-based policy recommendations to Members and encouraging them to work together, with the aims to

safeguard food security and livelihoods of the most vulnerable and ensure a unified One Health approach. FAO is issuing a wide range of **COVID-19 Policy Briefs** and publications<sup>6</sup>, and implementing an array of tools to support policy analyses and assess the impact of COVID-19, such as the Food and Agriculture Policy Decisions Analysis (FAPDA) database<sup>7</sup>.

FAO has launched a comprehensive **COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme**<sup>8</sup>, which the COAG welcomed, to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while strengthening the long-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods. The Programme has seven key areas of action to ensure rapid and continued support to the most vulnerable while anticipating the secondary repercussions of the virus; i.e. Data for decision-making, Economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty, Trade and food safety standards, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, Preventing the next zoonotic pandemic, Boosting smallholder resilience for recovery, and food systems transformation, in line with the approach ‘building to transform’<sup>9</sup> during response and recovery.

To strengthen the global response and concerted action to prevent the COVID-19 international health emergency from triggering a major world food crisis, FAO launched the **Food Coalition**<sup>10</sup>, as a voluntary multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral alliance set up to support innovative initiatives to ensure global food access, and increase the resilience of agri-food systems. It will help countries to meet SDG 2 and other related SDGs, and work to ensure sustainable food systems, improve nutrition, increase agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale and family farmers, especially women, youth, indigenous peoples, and raise rural living standards.

In its 27th Session, the Committee on Agriculture, stressed the importance of the 2030 Agenda and its commitment to **ending hunger and poverty**, notably tackling its root causes by building sustainability and resilience in food systems. It urged FAO to continue the timely provision of data and information, policy analysis and evidence-based recommendations to address the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on food security and nutrition, including in the context of the One Health approach, and requested to enhance work with partners to provide its expertise, data, analysis and technical support to countries to strengthen implementation of policy advice and to accelerate investments, with a strong monitoring and evaluation system, particularly in Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and innovation in order to help countries ‘build back better’.

COAG welcomed FAO’s collaborative efforts to protect lives and livelihoods and to maintain the functioning of food value chains and open markets at the global, regional, national and local levels. It supported efforts to promote a One Health approach to enhance food safety, and to facilitate international policy dialogue and cooperation at the regional and global levels, to provide a coordinated response to the food security, nutrition and socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

#### **e. Various measures and policy recommendations on building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**

In order to accelerate action for achieving the 2030 Agenda, COAG urged the move to sustainable food systems and advised on the following key actions:

- The Committee emphasised the **importance of the livestock sector and its role in achieving SDGs** and its linkages to food security, sustainable food systems, nutrition, healthy diets, improved livelihoods and poverty eradication. It highlighted the sector’s linkages to animal health and welfare, the One Health approach, natural resources and climate change, and the importance of strengthening cooperation and collaboration with

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<sup>6</sup> FAO COVID-19 website: <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://fapda.apps.fao.org/fapda/#main.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fao.org/partnerships/resource-partners/covid-19/en/>

<sup>9</sup> UN Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition, June 2020  
<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-impact-covid-19-food-security-and-nutrition>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fao.org/food-coalition/en/>

relevant regional and global bodies and initiatives. COAG requested FAO to strengthen its support for collecting data and developing tools to guide countries in formulating institutional mechanisms for the implementation of livestock policy and investments, and to promote the dissemination of good practices and technical cooperation for sustainable livestock production, by fostering integrated systems, increased productivity, adaptation, and low carbon and resilient livestock and to safeguard human, animal and environmental health. COAG requested to produce a comprehensive, science and evidence-based **global assessment** of the contribution of livestock to food security, sustainable food systems, nutrition and healthy diets, and to develop a technical document of good practices, as the basis to consider initiating negotiations by Members on voluntary guidelines to enhance the productivity of small-scale livestock keepers.

- To strengthen its work on livestock, COAG endorsed the **Sub-Committee on Livestock** as an intergovernmental forum with a mandate to discuss and build consensus on livestock issues and priorities, including in poverty alleviation, food security and nutrition, sustainable livelihoods and achieving the 2030 Agenda, and collaboration with specialized organizations and existing multiple stakeholder partnerships.
- COAG stressed the critical importance of **prevention and management of Animal and Plant Pest and Diseases (APPDs)** for food security, and welcomed FAO's efforts to address these challenges at global, regional and country levels, particularly the Desert Locust emergency response and the Global Action on Fall Armyworm (FAW), and the progressive elimination of high impact transboundary animal diseases under the FAO-OIE Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs). The Committee noted effective regionalization in accordance with International Standard Setting Bodies, notably Codex Alimentarius, International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and OIE, and consistent with WTO rules, as an important tool to maintain trade, while ensuring adequate pest and disease control.
- The Committee welcomed FAO's work to reduce the burden of **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** in food and agriculture and its new Action Plan on AMR, and appreciated the cooperation with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the World Health Organization (WHO) within the Tripartite collaboration.
- Among the policy instruments, COAG welcomed the proposed **Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction (CoC)**, to contribute to Food Loss and Waste (FLW) reduction globally and to sustainable food systems development and achieving the SDGs, in particular SDG target 12.3, and asked FAO to follow a holistic approach to include all stakeholders along the whole food chain as highlighted in the related CFS HLPE report and CFS agreed policy recommendations<sup>11</sup>. It requested FAO to continue to support countries in their FLW reduction efforts, including for the measurement of FLW, and to develop codes of good practice and technical guidelines. The CoCs builds on FAO's 2019 Flagship report 'The State of Food and Agriculture - Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction'<sup>12</sup> which provided new analysis of the world's food post-harvest losses.

**Selected recommendations for accelerating progress towards achievement of specific SDGs under review in 2021, which are, 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships.**

The **UN Decade of Action** for scaling-up and accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda will need to address at the same time the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other major threats like climate change. There is thus an urgent need to accelerate the transformation, as appropriate, of **food systems** to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and to reduce the impact of food systems on biodiversity, natural resources, ecosystems and the climate.

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<sup>11</sup> CFS HLPE report 'Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems', 2014. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3901e.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6030en/ca6030en.pdf>

The FAO Committee on Agriculture emphasizes the importance of **sustainable food systems** in achieving the 2030 Agenda, and calls for coordination of all stakeholders in **adopting a food systems approach, with** added urgency in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, to address food insecurity and malnutrition, livelihoods and the management of natural resources in a comprehensive and effective way.

Food and agriculture play a key role for achieving the interconnected SDGs, and must strengthen its sustainability in the three pillars, economic, social and environmental, to enhance their contribution to food security, nutrition and healthy diets and build back better to increase resilience, and to preventing future pandemics. In particular, the livestock sector plays a significant role in sustainable agricultural development, directly or indirectly contributing to each of the 17 SDGs, to food security, nutrition and healthy diets; inclusive economic growth and improving livelihoods; animal health and welfare; and natural resources and climate change.

COAG urges to keep a strong focus on **eradication of hunger and malnutrition**, food systems and nutrition, while strengthening the following areas: capacity development to improve quality and availability of data, including through capacity development at country level, analysis and tracking of SDG indicators for better decision making; support livelihood of vulnerable segments of the population, particularly small scale producers, family farmers, rural women and youth; digital agriculture and innovation with inclusion of smallholder farmer, reducing food loss and waste; addressing issues related to climate change and biodiversity in relation to food and agriculture; support to the Codex Alimentarius related science-based programmes and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC); One Health within the Tripartite collaboration between FAO/WHO/OIE; antimicrobial resistance (AMR); food safety; addressing transboundary plant pests and animal diseases, and strengthen partnerships to achieve these priorities.