



Food and Agriculture
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“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

Inputs by Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO): Highlights from FAO Governing Bodies

This document summarizes policy deliberations related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of FAO Governing bodies notably the FAO Council, FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO), the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP), and other intergovernmental bodies hosted in FAO, notably, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), the Codex Alimentarius and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

According to their respective mandates, bodies analyzed progress, key challenges and opportunities and provided policy guidance to ensure that integrated approaches to food security, nutrition, and sustainable agrifood systems are adopted at country level to support nationally agreed Sustainable Development Plans, Strategies, and Programmes, and promote accelerated actions and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.

The complete inputs of the above bodies are included as Annexes to this contribution.

- a. **Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17, bearing in mind the interlinkages with other SDGs**
 1. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, hunger worldwide continued to increase since 2014. Two billion people did not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food and three billion people could not afford healthy diets. This has been exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2021¹, estimated that **between 720 and 811 million people in the world faced hunger in 2020 - as many as 161 million more than in 2019, under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic**. Projections that consider the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that 30 million more people will face hunger in 2030 compared to a scenario in which the pandemic had not occurred, revealing lasting effects on global food security.

¹ 2021 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI): <https://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2021/en/>

¹ 2021 Global Report on Food Crises: <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1410395/>

2. The **2021 Global Report on Food Crises**² estimated that 155 million people in 55 countries/territories were classified as being in crisis or worse (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Phase 3 or above), an increase of around 20 million people from 2019. While it is difficult to disentangle the precise effects of COVID-19 from those of other stressors, the report's analysis shows that **the pandemic has had a compounding effect on these pre-existing and ongoing drivers of the food crisis** mainly through declining economic activity related to COVID-19 restrictive measures, leading to income losses and reduced household purchasing power. **The UN Decade of Action** for scaling-up and accelerating 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, and reduce the impact of agrifood systems on biodiversity, natural resources, and ecosystems.
3. Worldwide, more than four billion people are employed or earn their livelihoods in agri-food production, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of agri-food products, and yet a **disproportionate number of the poor and hungry are to be found working in agrifood systems**. While the global agrifood systems have remained resilient, income losses, food price spikes and food access challenges were key drivers to the rise in undernourishment.
4. **Smallholder farmers and their families, and food workers in all sectors, are particularly vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19**. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic is **challenging the achievement of gender equality and empowering all women and girls** (SDG 5) - rural women bear a disproportionate burden in the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic is also negatively impacting other vulnerable groups, such as agricultural producers, processors and traders, responders and caregivers, youth, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic has had **an unprecedented impact on the fisheries and aquaculture sector**, including, intensifying data scarcity problems, and jeopardizing timely policy responses. According to WHO, the international trade of animals and animal products is not contributing to the spread of COVID-19 and there is currently no scientifically based evidence that humans can be infected with COVID-19 through food, including fish and fish products, or the packaging in which they are stored. COFI 34 expressed its commitment to the **International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA)**³ in 2022, and emphasized the opportunity to focus attention on the role of small-scale and artisanal fisheries and aquaculture in poverty eradication, ending hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition.
6. The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures to control its spread **affected the global trading system, domestic and international supply chains, and food demand**. However, despite the disruptions, global food commodity markets and agricultural trade have proved relatively resilient and continued to function. In this regard, it is extremely important to continue and intensify work on agricultural market monitoring and assessment and on early warning to enhance transparency, inform policy decisions and allow timely interventions. The Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) noted the high uncertainty surrounding future developments in food and agricultural markets and highlighted the importance of international trade for increasing resilience.
7. The Committee on Forestry (COFO) considers the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2020 report as a major contribution to the monitoring of SDG 15. COFO recognized that **the**

³ International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA): <https://www.fao.org/artisanal-fisheries-aquaculture-2022/home/en/>

world's forest area continues to decrease but at a slightly slower rate than previous decades. Despite the overall loss of forest, the world continues to progress towards sustainable forest management. Since 2010, there has been a 27 percent increase in forests under certification schemes and the proportion of forest within protected area has now reached 18 percent. Although it is too soon to analyze the long-term impacts, if any, of COVID-19 on the forest sector, in the short term, **there have been negative effects on supply and demand for products, trade patterns and supply chains.** Overall, there was a 5.1 percent reduction in forest product exports in 2020 and a 7 percent drop in imports, but the trade fluctuated over the year. However, the dramatic decline in the second quarter of 2020 was followed by a steep recovery.

8. The **conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture**, within production systems and other relevant terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, is essential for tackling the challenges ahead. Ambitious and adequate actions have to be implemented, supporting the transition to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems that promote the sustainable use, conservation and restoration of biodiversity for food and agriculture, leaving no farmer, livestock keeper and pastoralist, forest-based producer, fisher and aquaculturalist behind; and taking into account the contributions and needs of women, indigenous peoples and local communities. The cross-sectoral **Framework for Action on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture**⁴ constitute important policy instruments relevant to the achievement of various SDGs being discussed at the HPLF (e.g., SDGs 14 & 15).
9. The Forty-second Session of the FAO Conference in June 2021 endorsed the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31⁵, which aims to tackle some major global and regional challenges in areas of FAO's mandate, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Putting the SDGs as its cornerstone, **the new Strategic Framework galvanizes FAO's action towards the achievement of the SDGs through four main aspirations: Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life.** This includes 20 Programme Priority Areas under the Four Betters grounded in specific SDG targets to which the Organization is well-positioned to contribute, along with the four accelerators of technology, innovation (including digital), data (including big data) and complements (governance, human capital, institutions) and new cross-cutting themes of gender, youth and inclusion.
10. FAO **established the Office of Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter 'OSG') in 2021 to support agrifood systems transformations in support of the achievement of the SDGs**, including; accelerate SDG implementation through integrated and innovative agri-food solutions; empower countries and local communities; supporting Voluntary National Review (VNR) preparations through technical assistance; and foster inclusive and global stakeholder cooperation mechanisms and engage other stakeholders and the wider UN to co-create agrifood systems transformation pathways, which would also benefit resilient, robust and equitable COVID-19 recovery. Drawing upon FAO's broad technical expertise as well as its country and regional networks, the new SDG office plays a pivotal role in connecting the dots and bridging the gaps towards sustainable agrifood systems across all three dimensions of sustainable development: social, environmental, and economic.
11. **The UN Food Systems Summit** that was held in 2021 has proved to be a successful initiative and an historical event, putting agrifood systems transformation at the center stage of delivering the SDGs by 2030. The Summit captivated a wide range of stakeholders to successfully build the necessary momentum for an ambitious and SDG-relevant action to transform agrifood systems for

⁴ Framework for Action on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture: [CGRFA-18/21/Report, Appendix C](#)

⁵ FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31: <https://www.fao.org/strategic-framework/en>

sustainability. The Summit was also unprecedented in enabling knowledge co-creation and information exchange on the pressing challenges that drive the future of our agrifood systems. Through innovative and participatory dialogue platforms, delegates co-created bottom-up solutions to inspire and inform policymakers for a transformative agrifood system shift.

12. As part of Summit's Portfolio of Action follow-up, Five Action Areas were identified to ensure that the future agrifood systems can nourish all people, boost nature-based solutions, advance equitable livelihoods, promote decent work and empowered communities, build resilience, and accelerate the means of implementation. The UN Secretary-General also committed the UN system to **establish a Food Systems Coordination Hub** (hereafter 'the Hub') hosted by FAO and led by FAO, WFP, IFAD, DCO, UNEP and others and working across the wider UN system and other partners, such as non-governmental organizations, civil society and businesses. In a complementary capacity to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Hub draws further upon the Summit follow-up actions and act as the catalyst to help countries to build economically, socially and environmentally sustainable agrifood systems with effective and solid action to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

b. Actions, policy guidance, progress, challenges and areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the SDGs

The HLPF may wish to consider the following action points, which were extracted from the various submissions by FAO's Governing Bodies included in the Annexes:

- a) Highlight the urgency required to **address the compounding threat of the COVID pandemic on existing crises** - such as conflict, natural disasters, climate change, pests and plagues - that are already stressing agrifood systems and triggering food insecurity around the globe, and threatening progress in achieving the SDGs.
- b) Recognize **the crucial role of sustainable agrifood systems in achieving the 2030 Agenda** and coordination of all stakeholders in adopting an agrifood 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.
- c) Recognize **the key role that food and agriculture play for achieving the interconnected SDGs** and strive to strengthen food and agriculture's role in the three sustainability 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 prevent future pandemics.
- d) Note the importance of **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.
- e) Welcome progress and ongoing reporting of the **FAO Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative**, which strengthens national capacities for improved data integration and analysis for evidence-based decision-making and that adopts a match-making approach to building multi-dimensional partnerships to mobilize means of implementation and promote innovation in practices, technology, investment, policy and institutions, including for response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated impacts.
- f) **Endorse the One Health approach** and take note of the importance of the joint work of FAO and WHO and request 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.

- g) Welcome the work of the **Codex Alimentarius and its related science-based programmes** regarding antimicrobial resistance (AMR), food safety, addressing transboundary plant pests and animal diseases, and strengthen partnerships to achieve these priorities.
- h) Acknowledge the need to **support livelihoods of vulnerable segments of the population**, particularly small-scale producers, family farmers, rural women and youth.
- i) Recognize **the crucial role of markets and trade in contributing to healthy diets and ending food insecurity and malnutrition** in all of its forms, especially for the poor and vulnerable, including through the generation of employment and income.
- j) Recognize **the importance of trade for contributing to the availability, accessibility and affordability of food, including nutritious food**, as well as the stability of markets and the limitation of extreme food price volatility, and recalled and underlined the importance that, in line with the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and in keeping with their commitments under the WTO agreements.
- k) Recognize the **key role that well-functioning agrifood markets and trade** can play in promoting agricultural productivity growth and sustainable development, and in contributing to global food security.
- l) Highlight **the importance of transparency in market conditions and policies** in food and agriculture, through the provision of up-to-date and credible data and information.
- m) Emphasize **the importance of a freer, fairer, predictable, and non-discriminatory, rules-based multilateral trading system**, under the World Trade Organization (WTO) and consistent with its rules, for promoting agricultural and rural development;
- n) Call on governments to **avoid policies that could undermine the proper functioning of agrifood markets and to adhere to international standards**, including those set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), in line with the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) and the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement, to facilitate and expedite regional and global trade in food and agriculture.
- o) Recognize that **digital technologies and electronic-based tools can be leveraged to facilitate trade and make agrifood markets more efficient, inclusive and sustainable**, and stress the importance of reducing the digital gap and promoting the digitalization of agrifood systems.
- p) Recognize the role of forests and sustainable forest management in building climate change resilience and their importance in climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the need to step up actions **to halt deforestation, forest degradation and loss of forest biodiversity**, and to **scale up forest and landscape restoration efforts**, at all levels.
- q) Recognize the need to **implement and improve fisheries assessment and management systems** in all regions, particularly in those where fish stock status is declining or unknown, including through coordinated capacity building programmes that address the needs and priorities of developing countries, with particular attention to data-poor regions.
- r) Acknowledge the need to **strengthen the global response to the loss of biodiversity** for food and agriculture through ambitious and adequate actions to support the transition to more efficient,

inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems that promote the sustainable use, conservation and restoration of biodiversity for food and agriculture.

- s) Welcome the need to **increase the awareness of the value of biodiversity for food and agriculture**, strengthening enabling frameworks for its sustainable use and conservation and improving cross-sectoral collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement.