



Inputs of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) to the thematic review of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2023, 10-19 July 2023

“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”

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 136 Members, 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 (SDGs), with a focus on actions to accelerate and scale-up progress, especially to achieve SDG 2 and other related SDGs, and addresses interdisciplinary topics, reflecting the crosscutting nature of major global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, biodiversity loss, One Health, and other key agrifood system issues.

COAG’s substantive inputs to the 2023 HLPF are based on relevant policy recommendations that have emerged from the 28th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG 28), held from 18 to 22 July 2022, comprising the outcomes of the first Session of the COAG Sub-Committee on Livestock held on 16-18 March 2022.

(a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs.

The adverse socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, combined with climate change, conflicts, economic shocks and growing inequalities, **set back efforts to achieve Agenda 2030, as per the *Tracking progress on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators 2022***,¹ report analyzing trends on selected indicators for which FAO is a custodian or contributing agency or have key implications for food and agriculture across eight SDGs (1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14 and 15), highlighting areas of progress and areas where further effort is needed.

With respect to **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**, the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2022* report² estimated that the number of people affected by chronic hunger globally rose to as many as 828 million in 2021, up 150 million people since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and 46 million more people since 2020. After remaining relatively unchanged since 2015, the prevalence of undernourishment in the world jumped from 8.0 to 9.3 percent in 2020 and rose at a slower pace in 2021 to 9.8 percent. It also shows that around 2.3 billion people in the world (29.3 percent) were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021 – 350 million more compared to before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic – and 11.7 percent of the world population faced food insecurity at severe levels. It estimates that 3.1 billion people globally could not afford a healthy diet in 2020, an increase of 112 million more people than in 2019.

¹ FAO. 2022. Tracking progress on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators 2022. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc1403en>

² FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2022. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0639en>

According to the *Global Report on Food Crisis 2022 Mid-Year Update*³ and the *Hunger Hotspots*⁴ (2022) reports, acute food insecurity continued to escalate as well. Up to 222 million people are expected to face acute food insecurity and to be in need of urgent assistance in 53 countries and territories (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above or equivalent).

The increase in global hunger in 2021 further reflects exacerbated inequalities across and within countries due to an unequal pattern of economic recovery among countries, and unrecovered income losses among those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Globally in 2020, an estimated 22 percent of children under five years of age were stunted, 6.7 percent were wasted, and 5.7 percent were overweight. Children in rural settings and poorer households, whose mothers received no formal education, were more vulnerable to stunting and wasting. The gender gap in food insecurity – which had grown in 2020 under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic – widened even further from 2020 to 2021. In 2021, 31.9 percent of women in the world were moderately or severely food insecure compared to 27.6 percent of men.

(b) Examples of key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and where support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2023.

In its 28th Session, the Committee highlighted key initiatives and actions, including:

- The role of **One Health**⁵ in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting with appreciation the focus of the FAO One Health Priority Programme in applying a holistic, coordinated, science and evidence-based One Health approach for sustainable agrifood systems, and the progressive management pathway for biosecurity as a framework to reduce the risks of animal and plant diseases, emerging zoonoses, and antimicrobial resistance. It welcomed the strengthening of the coordination of One Health activities between FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), forming the Quadripartite for One Health, and the development of a One Health Joint Plan of Action. COAG 28 recommended FAO to enhance data integration and sharing across sectors, to strengthen global One Health knowledge and scientific information systems, and early warning for resilience to emerging cross-sectoral threats, and to support Members, as appropriate, upon their request, on national One Health early warning frameworks for rapid risk assessments of animal and zoonotic disease threat.
- The progress made in implementing the **FAO Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 2021-2025**⁶ and support provided to countries in minimizing and containing AMR for more resilient and sustainable agrifood systems, requesting FAO to continue its implementation through a One Health approach in close collaboration with the Quadripartite, and to support Members in the implementation of good production practices, as well as AMR management throughout the food supply chain to reduce the need for and to promote the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials in agrifood systems. The Committee also encouraged relevant actors from the agriculture sector to engage actively establishing the AMR Multi-stakeholders Partnership Platform.
- The **UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028 (UNDF)**,^{7,8} recognizing the progress made and potential of family farming and the catalyzer role of the UNDF to facilitate the shift towards sustainable, inclusive and resilient agrifood systems; and inviting FAO to continue its close coordination with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in their leadership of the UNDF, to mobilize financial resources to promote concrete actions to strengthen the resilience of family farmers; and Members to accelerate efforts to support the UNDF through the adoption of supportive policies and further investments.

Contributions towards SDGs under the HLPF 2023 thematic review:

- **SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.** Water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation affect food security, nutrition and educational and economic opportunities for poor families across the world. Crops and livestock already account for 70 percent of all water withdrawals and is projected to increase. FAO works with countries to ensure water use in agriculture is

³ FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises. 2022. GRFC 2022 Mid-Year Update. Rome <https://www.fsinplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/GRFC%202022%20MYU%20Final.pdf>

⁴ WFP and FAO. 2022. Hunger Hotspots. FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity: October 2022 to January 2023 Outlook. Rome <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2134en/cc2134en.pdf>

⁵ COAG/2022/7

⁶ COAG/2022/8

⁷ COAG/2022/11

⁸ UNDF website: <https://www.fao.org/family-farming-decade/home/en/>

made more efficient, productive and environmentally friendly, building resilience of farming communities to cope with floods and droughts and applying clean water technologies, and to monitor water resources use and levels of water stress.

- The Committee welcomed the FAO report *The State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture (SOLAW21)*^{9,10} and recognized the importance of a paradigm shift towards sustainable agrifood systems to meet the growing demand for food, while conserving biodiversity and safeguarding land, soil and water for food security and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda; and recommended that FAO consider reporting these issues through a regular flagship publication to address the need for sufficient, reliable information, knowledge and analyses for informed policy decisions and programmes on food and agriculture at all levels. It encouraged Members to strengthen cooperation and use SOLAW21 assessments in order to enhance the sustainable management of land and water resources.
- COAG recognized the importance of **addressing water scarcity** for achieving food security and nutrition¹¹ and recommended FAO to step up the work of the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG)¹² of water tenure for the sustainable management of natural resources. It acknowledged the challenge of access to water resources for food security under conditions of water scarcity and climate change, and the importance of FAO's initiatives to understand the complexity of water rights, sustainable water management and to identify actionable and context-specific avenues to improve the governance of water tenure. It recommended FAO to undertake an assessment of existing water tenure arrangements, and to support Members in developing capacities to produce data on available and actual use of water resources for agriculture, and to initiate a Global Dialogue on Water Tenure, encouraging Members to participate in these exchanges at regional and global levels in identifying principles for the responsible governance of water tenure. COAG further welcomed the progress under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and recommended FAO to address the restoration of agricultural production ecosystems within its policies and programmes.
- **SDG 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean energy for all.** Energy has a key role in achieving food security and better nutrition. FAO supports a range of initiatives¹³ such as the [Energy-Smart Food for People and Climate \(ESF\) Programme](#), to support countries access modern energy services in agrifood systems by improving energy efficiency, increasing use of renewable energy and promoting a water-energy-food nexus approach, and the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP).¹⁴
- **SDG 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.** In rural areas, limited connectivity and access to markets as a result of isolation and weak infrastructure affects the livelihoods and food security of small-scale producers. Targeted interventions aimed at diversifying employment and providing small-scale producers with affordable access to technologies and infrastructure are essential to accelerating poverty reduction. FAO promotes sustainable development in rural communities through investments in transportation, storage, irrigation and communication technologies, to improve rural infrastructure, and strengthening markets and rural-urban linkages. Main related initiatives include [SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction](#), [Sustainable Food Value Chains Knowledge Platform](#), and [Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization](#).
- **SDG 11. Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.** By 2050, two-thirds of the global population will be urban dwellers. Rapid urban growth in the developing world is placing enormous demands on agrifood systems. Fluctuating food prices affect consumers and translate into diminished purchasing power and rising rates of food insecurity, compromising dietary quantity and quality. FAO promotes a holistic multi-stakeholder approach to address urban resilience and supports countries and their local governments, and other city/regional/national stakeholders in building multi-level governance and institutional capacities and partnerships necessary for more inclusive food security and nutrition policies and leverage investments. Main initiatives include the [Food for the cities Programme](#), [Urban Food Action Platform](#), [Urban and Peri-urban Forestry](#), and the [Green Cities Initiative](#) and other initiatives with multiple partners such as the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#) and [The Urban Food Systems Coalition](#).

⁹ COAG/2022/15

¹⁰ FAO. 2022. *The State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture – Systems at breaking point. Main report*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9910en>

¹¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/nj011en/nj011en.pdf>

¹² WASAG website: <https://www.fao.org/wasag/en/>

¹³ <https://www.fao.org/energy/home/en/>

¹⁴ GBEP website: <https://www.globalbioenergy.org/>

- COAG, at its 27th Session (2020), acknowledged **FAO's Urban Food Agenda**,^{15,16} 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, and to provide support to governments in adopting the Urban Food Agenda as well as to multi-stakeholder coordination between national and local/urban authorities.
- Among key policy instruments, the **Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction**,¹⁷ 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, following its review by COAG 27 it was endorsed by FAO Conference in 2021.¹⁸
- **SDG 17. Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.** The complexity and interconnectedness of the SDGs call for a new way of doing business, requiring all development actors to engage and share knowledge in supporting countries implement and monitor the SDGs. Partnerships¹⁹ are thus at the heart of FAO's mission to help build consensus for a sustainable world free from hunger. COAG values the key contribution of partnerships. The membership of COAG is open to all FAO Members, and it welcomes participation as observers from Inter-governmental Organizations, Civil Society and other Organizations.

(c) Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and that accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.

COAG established a **Sub-Committee on Livestock** in 2021 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 multi-stakeholder partnerships. COAG 28 endorsed the outcomes of the first Session of the COAG Sub-Committee on Livestock (March 2022),²⁰ including the progress made for producing a comprehensive, science and evidence-based global assessment of the contribution of livestock to food security, sustainable food systems, nutrition and healthy diets with the aim to provide holistic guidance and to support the sustainable transformation of the livestock sector to best contribute to the 2030 Agenda.

In relation to contributions to multiple and interconnected SDGs (SDG 1. No poverty; SDG 2. Zero hunger; SDG 3. Good Health and well-being; SDG 5. Gender equality, SDG 7. Affordable and clean energy; SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth; SDG 10. Reduce inequalities; SDG 12. Sustainable consumption and production; SDG 13. Climate action; SDG 15. Life on Land; and the SDGs under review); COAG 28 further:

- Welcomed progress made in the implementation of the **FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors** and its 2021-23 Action Plan,²¹ and support to Members in their efforts to mainstream biodiversity, and requested to finalize the 2024-27 Action Plan, taking into account developments under other relevant fora.
- Acknowledged the multiple **linkages between the agriculture and forestry sectors**,²² and underscored the need to achieve better synergies through inter-sectorial approaches for more sustainable agrifood systems. It recommended FAO to continue collecting and analyzing science and evidence-based data on agriculture and forestry interdependencies, including on the direct and underlying drivers of deforestation and land degradation. COAG invited FAO to support Members to further identify opportunities and implement actions to improve complementarity between the agriculture and forestry sectors and strengthen coordinated policy responses, and Members to promote greater and inclusive policy coherence between these sectors and to support small-scale producers, women, youth, local communities and Indigenous Peoples. To address drivers of deforestation and land degradation, COAG 28 requested FAO and Members to put greater emphasis on ways to decouple growth in agricultural production from forest and other biodiversity loss, keeping in mind

¹⁵ COAG/2020/12

¹⁶ <https://www.fao.org/urban-food-agenda/en/>

¹⁷ FAO. 2022. Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9433en>

¹⁸ C 2021/27. <https://www.fao.org/3/nf393en/nf393en.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.fao.org/partnerships/en/>

²⁰ COAG/2022/5

²¹ COAG/2022/13

²² COAG/2022/12

the necessity of poverty eradication and fighting hunger, and the needs of developing countries in terms of financial assistance and capacity building.

- Acknowledging the need for improved intersectoral collaboration and governance to **address plastic use throughout agrifood systems**,²³ recommended FAO to address knowledge gaps through inclusive consultations with Members and relevant stakeholders, and to develop, within its mandate, a Voluntary Code of Conduct on the sustainable use of plastics in agriculture.
- Commended the development of the **FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031**²⁴ and the **Science and Innovation Strategy (2022-25)**,²⁵ endorsed by the FAO Council,²⁶ and welcomed the proposed development of Action Plans, aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and the SDGs.
- Further advised on addressing key issues such as i. Strategic Priorities for **Food Safety** within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31;²⁷ ii. the development and use of **FAO's strategic foresight products**, such as the report *The Future of Food and Agriculture – Drivers and triggers for transformation*,²⁸ to inform national development strategies for sustainable agrifood systems; and iii. Actions to enable smallholders and family farmers to access and participate in appropriate **innovation**,²⁹ information and advisory services;

(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit.

- The sustainable, resilient and inclusive **recovery from the pandemic** while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, will need to address at the same time other major threats such as climate change, conflicts, transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases, economic shocks, combined with growing inequalities.
- The FAO Committee on Agriculture emphasizes the importance of the transition towards **sustainable and resilient agrifood systems** in achieving the 2030 Agenda, and calls for coordination of all stakeholders in **adopting a food systems approach**, with added urgency for resilient and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, address food insecurity and malnutrition, and support livelihoods and the sustainable use and management of natural resources.
- There is **need to accelerate the transformation, as appropriate, of agrifood systems** to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and to reduce its impact on biodiversity, natural resources, ecosystems and the climate. Agrifood systems play a key role for achieving the interconnected SDGs, and must strengthen their 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.
- Applying a holistic, coordinated, science and evidence-based **One Health** approach for sustainable agrifood systems is key for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Urgent action is needed to **support livelihoods of vulnerable groups** of the population, particularly small-scale producers, family farmers, women and youth; addressing issues related to climate change, biodiversity and agriculture and forestry linkages for sustainable agrifood systems, reducing inequalities and strengthen partnerships to achieve these priorities.

²³ COAG/2022/16

²⁴ COAG/2022/20 Rev.1; COAG/2022/INF/8 Rev.1

²⁵ COAG/2022/22; COAG/2022/INF/9 Rev.1

²⁶ CL 171/REP

²⁷ COAG/2022/6

²⁸ FAO. 2022. *The future of food and agriculture – Drivers and triggers for transformation*. The Future of Food and Agriculture, no. 3. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0959en>

²⁹ COAG/2022/10