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

Inputs from FAO Governing Bodies and Other Intergovernmental Bodies hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

This synthesis document summarizes policy deliberations related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by FAO Governing Bodies and other intergovernmental bodies: FAO Governing Bodies such as the Conference, the Council, and the Technical Committees which include the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the Committee on Forestry (COFO), the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), and the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP), as well as other intergovernmental bodies hosted in FAO, notably, the Codex Alimentarius, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

According to their respective mandates, the bodies analyze progress, key challenges and opportunities, and provide 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, Programmes, Partnerships and Investments, and promote accelerated actions and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs.

The inputs have been summarized according to a template provided by the President of the Economic and Social Council:

- (a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17.
- (b) Three key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas where support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of SDGs under review in July 2023.
- (c) Examples of Specific Actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress toward multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathway for achieving the SDGs.
- (d) Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental bodies, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- (e) Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit.

The complete inputs of these intergovernmental bodies are included as annexes to this synthesis.

Synthesis of inputs received from FAO Governing Bodies and Technical Committees as well as other intergovernmental bodies hosted at FAO HQ in Rome

PERSPECTIVE

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations with a mandate in the areas of food and agriculture that touches upon nearly every aspect of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Its Technical Committees on Agriculture, Commodity Problems (trade and markets), Fisheries, and Forestry reflect the broad range of issues that engage FAO Member Nations and Observers, while the hosted intergovernmental bodies provide vital, inclusive forums for improving global collective action on issues ranging from food security, nutrition, and food safety to biodiversity and plant and animal genetic resources, climate change, science and innovation for food and agriculture. The Council and the Conference provide overall guidance, to ensure the coherence of the whole, assuming responsibility for oversight of the strategic management, adaptation and further development of the Organization.

Sustainable development of food and agriculture can play a vital role in eradicating extreme poverty, particularly in rural areas, ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition, and reducing inequalities both within and among nations. It can also have a vital impact on biodiversity; human, animal and ecosystem health; land, water, and marine resources; and climate change and its many impacts. In recent years, FAO has recognized and acted upon the need to develop more inclusive, better integrated approaches to the broad range of issues its Members confront. To this end, FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 takes agrifood systems transformation – the sustainable development of food and agriculture guided by the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs – as the principal organizing and integrating objective for all of FAO’s work. Through the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 and the UN Secretary-General’s Food Systems Summit 2021, broad awareness has emerged of the singular contribution that agrifood systems transformation can make to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, and this systems-oriented approach has become a pillar of the global Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs.

Unfortunately, in the face of this shared purpose, recent years have seen the emergence of formidable challenges. Complex, overlapping and mutually reinforcing crises – the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing impacts of the biodiversity, natural resource, and climate crises, protracted conflicts and the war in Ukraine – have combined to slow and, in many areas, reverse progress on hunger and malnutrition. This synthesis report highlights the major lines of policy deliberation in several intergovernmental bodies of FAO and outlines the key actions taken or recommended to overcome these fundamental challenges for people and planet.

(a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17.

1. The last edition of “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World” (SOFI) Report, released in July 2022, estimates that the number of people affected by chronic hunger globally rose to as many as 828 million in 2021, up 150 million since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. After remaining relatively unchanged after 2015, the proportion of people worldwide suffering from undernourishment jumped from 8.0 to 9.3 percent in 2020 and continued to rise to 9.8 percent in 2021. Projections, which appear increasingly optimistic considering recent events, are that nearly 670 million

people will still be facing hunger in 2030 – 8 percent of the world population, which is the same as in 2015 when the 2030 Agenda was launched.

2. The same SOFI report shows that around 2.3 billion people in the world (29.3 percent) were either moderately or severely food insecure in 2021 – 350 million more than before the outbreak of the pandemic. The proportion of the population counted as severely food insecure rose to 11.7 percent. The report also estimates that 3.1 billion people globally could not afford a healthy diet in 2020, an increase of more than 112 million more people than in 2019.

3. According to the “Global Report on Food Crises 2022 Mid-Year Update” and the “Hunger Hotspots Report”, both published in September 2022, acute food insecurity continued to escalate as well. As many as 222 million people are expected to face acute food insecurity and to need urgent assistance in 53 countries and territories (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above).

4. Altogether, the outlook is one of continued risk for broad and deepening food crises. Elements that explain the deterioration of food security since 2015 include:

- a. Economic slowdowns and downturns affecting the capabilities of lower income countries and people in vulnerable situations to produce, buy or import food;
- b. the impacts of extreme and more frequent climatic events, the continuing overuse, deterioration, and destruction of biodiversity, land, soil, water and marine resources, and of the ecosystems that sustain life; and
- c. conflicts and protracted crises in many vulnerable countries.

5. The socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine exacerbate these drivers. COVID-19 has accentuated inequalities across and within countries due to the unequal pattern of economic recovery among countries and unrecovered income losses among those most affected by the pandemic. The war in Ukraine engages two countries that are both net exporters of agricultural products and play leading supply roles in global markets of foodstuffs and fertilizers, where exportable supplies are highly concentrated, impacting world agrifood markets through the channels of trade, production, prices and energy, casting a shadow over the state of global food security and nutrition.

6. Three types of risk are posed by the current scenario. The first is the risk that rising food prices pose to *food access*. A host of factors contributed to the increase in world food commodity prices, including unfavorable weather in major supplying countries, rising production and transportation costs, disruptions to supply chains due to COVID-19, uncertainties about export restrictions by major exporting countries, and a strong global demand for food and feed products. As a result, the global food import bill was expected to reach an all-time high of more than \$1.9 trillion in 2022, an increase of 10.3 percent, or nearly \$181 billion more than in 2021.

7. A second risk is presented by soaring fertilizer and other input prices that threaten *food availability*. World fertilizer and other input prices have risen sharply because of increasing energy and natural gas prices, the COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, and restrictive trade policies imposed by some major exporting countries. As a result, overall production costs are soaring. This poses an additional burden to farmers who have to face lower profitability and squeezed revenues, and is raising concerns about lower fertilizer and other input application by farmers, and thus lower production in 2023.

8. A third kind of risk comes in the form of slower economic growth and soaring inflation. The IMF *World Economic Outlook*, published in October 2022, highlighted that global economic activity is

experiencing a broad-based and sharper-than-expected slowdown, with inflation higher than seen in several decades. Growth is expected to fall from 6.0 percent in 2021 to 3.2 percent in 2022, and 2.7 percent in 2023. Meanwhile global inflation is forecast to increase from 4.7 percent in 2021 to 8.8 percent in 2022, and then slow to 6.5 percent in 2023. The economic slowdown is reducing demand for food, especially in low- and low medium-income countries, with negative consequences for food security and nutrition.

9. Referring to the SDGs under review in 2023, FAO Technical Committees and other intergovernmental bodies confirmed these challenges and highlighted additional specific areas of focus:

- a. The Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) highlights that **trade, along with efficient and enhanced productivity and sustainable agrifood systems, plays a vital role in improving global food security** and nutrition, as well as addressing the challenges and uncertainties that commodity markets are facing. The CCP underlines the **importance of a freer, fairer, predictable, and non-discriminatory, rules-based multilateral trading system** under the WTO and consistent with its rules for promoting agricultural and rural development and contributing to achieving food security and better nutrition for all.
- b. The Committee on Agriculture (COAG) observes that 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 COAG further notes that **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 26.7 percent of men.
- c. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) stresses that the challenges presented by the pandemic and other factors reinforce the **need for collaborative action to support political, economic and social change** to ensure that the recovery reduces carbon emissions, conserves natural resources, creates better jobs, advances gender equality and tackles growing poverty and inequalities. It underscored the **importance of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in meeting future food needs**, and in achieving sustainable and resilient agrifood systems and welcomed global initiatives to strengthen partnerships and the promotion of food from the ocean and inland waters. In that regard further stressed the crucial contribution of small-scale and artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers, and the need to address gender equity and inequalities in the fisheries and aquaculture sector;
- d. The Committee on Forests (COFO) highlights that the **global water cycle is highly dependent on the interaction between forests and water** and asserted that the forest-water nexus is key to SDGs 6, 13, 14, and 15. Together these SDGs support the implementation of other SDGs by ensuring that the ecological infrastructure is in place and able to adapt to climate change. With respect to SDG 11, COFO recognizes that **sustainable management of urban and peri-urban forests and trees** contributes to achievement of the SDGs, promotes people's health and well-being, and helps tackle climate change. The Committee also notes that the pandemic has brought new awareness of the **importance of access to green space** as a means of improving the physical and mental health of urban dwellers.
- e. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) highlights **the disproportionate impact of the crisis on the poor**, persons with disabilities, small scale food producers and family farmers, women, youth, older persons and children as well as those living in vulnerable situations. CFS Members reaffirmed their commitment to strive for a world free from

hunger where countries implement the Voluntary Guidelines for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. The CFS also stresses the **importance of combining short- and medium-term with long-term solutions** to the crisis.

- f. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) reports that, in recognition of **the role of water in food production**, its Members have agreed to develop guidelines on the safe use and reuse of water in food production. General guidelines and more specific guidelines in relation to water use and reuse in fresh fruits and vegetables have been completed and proposed for adoption. This ongoing work contributes materially to target 6.4 to substantially increase water use efficiency.
- g. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) notes that **during the COVID-19 pandemic significant impact occurred at the level of access to, and especially demand for, seeds** in developing countries due to lower producer incomes and weaker support programmes (e.g. subsidies, financial services, extension, and insurance). While a certain level of resilience has been demonstrated, sustaining that resilience requires long-term complementary actions by all actors – gene banks, researchers and breeders, farmers and seed companies – within the framework of the ITPGRFA.

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

10. Despite the gravity of the challenges presented, the global response during the past year provides important evidence that the UN global architecture for agrifood systems governance offers a capacious platform for stimulating and enabling effective collective action across regions and continents to contain the impacts of major crises. This capacity has been demonstrated in three areas: provision of timely, actionable data and information on emerging problems; coordination of policy response; and support to implementation of key initiatives.

11. First, FAO provides a trusted connecting structure for aggregating, analyzing and disseminating timely data from many sources. This includes the Organization's regular reporting on food prices through the monthly Food Price Index and the Food price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) Bulletin; the publication of the Agriculture Monitoring Information System (AMIS) Marketing Monitor, providing a synopsis of major market developments for wheat, maize rice and soybeans; the publication of the Food Outlook, presenting a comprehensive assessment of food commodity markets; and the Crop Prospects and Food Situation report, providing an analysis of the food situation and food security conditions by geographic region. Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, FAO has provided a series of briefs and information notes, including assessments of impacts on global agrifood markets and food security. These undertakings are complemented by a variety of partnership initiatives to strengthen food security information, assessments and analysis. These include the Global Network against Food Crises, the Global Information and Early Warning system on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS), and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

12. Second, FAO has provided direct support to several key global forums seeking to formulate a coherent, effective global or regional response. FAO reporting and briefings have supported UN Security Council discussions and action, the food stream of the UN Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance co-chaired by FAO, a special meeting convened by the President of the General

Assembly and the Chair of the CFS, several ministerial meetings of the G7 and a high-level conference on “Uniting for Global Food Security”, and joined forces with the heads of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Food Programme and World Trade Organization. FAO also convened two regional ministerial dialogues, in East Africa and West Africa, to identify and implement lasting solutions to acute food insecurity.

13. Third, FAO has contributed materially to the formulation and implementation of several important policy initiatives to contain and mitigate the impact of the global food crisis. These include:

- a. **Food Import Financing Facility (FIFF)** – In April 2022 FAO proposed the establishment of an FIFF to help countries shoulder the burden of soaring costs of food imports and improve access to food at country level. Based on a comprehensive FAO assessment, the proposed facility would cover 62 countries with a population of 1.78 billion. FAO welcomes the decision of the Executive Board of the IMF on September 30, 2022, acting on the FIFF proposal, to establish a **Food Shock Window** to provide access to emergency financing for countries facing balance-of-payment problems related to the global food crisis.
- b. **Fertilizer assessments and policy responses** – FAO is investigating the availability and access to fertilizers and established a Fertilizer Trade Tracker, an online tool that allows countries to gauge remaining import needs and/or unrealized export availabilities for the current crop and calendar year. The estimates distinguish between the main nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium) and results are updated monthly. FAO also developed a methodology for prioritizing allocations of available international fertilizer supplies to countries in Africa for the Global Crisis Response Group and the Sustain Africa Initiative. And, jointly with the WTO, FAO has prepared a paper to track recent trends and assess trade restrictions in global fertilizer markets as well as fertilizer needs in vulnerable countries.
- c. **Soil Nutrient Maps** – Decisions on soil management, including the application of all types of fertilizers, should be based on soil analytical data. To this end, FAO promotes the adoption of the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and management of Fertilizers. In this context, FAO advocates the use of soil nutrient maps to guide informed decisions for the judicious use of fertilizers, with the objective to help farmers boost productivity and cope with the rising price of fertilizers, while protecting the environment.
- d. **One Health and Zoonosis** – Left uncontrolled and unchecked, pests and diseases can exacerbate the strain on food production, food security and food safety as well as ecosystems services and trade, thereby threatening One Health – human, plant, animal and ecosystems health. FAO is working closely with other Quadripartite¹ partners including through the One Health Joint Plan of Action and the FAO-WOAH Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GFTADs), bringing an agrifood systems perspective to the support to countries to enhance prevention and control of high impact diseases; enhance the distribution of essential supplies including vaccinations; strengthen early warning systems and emergency management applying the One Health Approach.
- e. **Social Safety Nets and Social Protection** – In many countries, the price shocks in the cost of food, fuel and fertilizer have squeezed household budgets already depleted by two years of pandemic-induced job and income losses. Humanitarian and longer-term social

¹ FAO, WHO, UNEP and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)

protection responses, building on and strengthening measures put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, will be needed to mitigate the negative impact of these developments on the food security and nutritional status of people around the world. To inform these responses, FAO led the drafting of an interagency statement on the Social Protection Response to the Food Price Shocks, which was released by the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) in August 2022.

14. Referring to the successful negotiation and implementation, under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General and Türkiye, of the Initiative on Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports, known as “**the Black Sea Grain Initiative**”, the FAO Council requested FAO’s political and technical support for sustaining the initiative, noting its importance to ensuring food availability and access to countries in all regions, especially the most vulnerable populations.

15. Despite these important, high-impact responses, there remain several areas where action has been inadequate to address compelling needs. Among these, three areas are particularly important:

- a. A key theme emerging from recent experience with multiple, interconnected crises is the recognition that **short-term measures to meet high-priority needs driven by emergent contingencies should be better linked to longer-term measures and collective action to transform, through sustainable development, the underlying conditions that create vulnerabilities and undermine resilience**. Circumstances permitting, funding and financing provided in the context of responding to short-term catastrophes and disruptions, such as those triggered by natural disasters and human-caused catastrophic events, should be utilized in ways that begin to build the social and material foundations for transformative change.
- b. A second area for potential strengthening comes from the recognition that **one of the most serious threats in humanitarian crises tend to be food crises arising from the disruption of local agrifood systems**, whether the immediate trigger is climate change, ecosystem destruction, depletion or destruction of natural resources, loss of access to markets, or protracted conflict – often in combination. Abundant evidence exists to demonstrate that **investment in agrifood systems restoration and transformation is the most cost-effective way not only to protect and revive livelihoods, but also to strengthen resilience to natural and man-made shocks, and establish essential conditions for longer-term peace, prosperity and sustainable development**.
- c. A third area requiring greater focus is technical and policy assistance **support to implementation of nationally-led programmes of agrifood systems transformation**. Despite the overwhelming challenges they often face, most developing countries, including many of the poorest, have developed ambitious national policies and investment plans for promoting agrifood systems transformation as a lead sector for accelerating overall economic development. These plans, moreover, have often been developed with considerable international assistance. Unfortunately, the requisite international support typically does not include adequate support for implementation of these plans, a task that is far more complex than the design of policies and that presents the most important barrier to success.

National ownership and national leadership being a critical success factor for national development, more investment should be made to help catalyze multi-stakeholder support and co-investment as key elements of a collaborative effort to strengthen national capacities for sustainable development beyond the analysis phase. Funding modalities should shift as well, from smaller, shorter-term donor-driven project-based investment, to

more flexible and dynamic, longer-term partnership approaches to support national programmes. Programme support modalities also demand greater transparency and accountability for results among partners, aided by regular reporting and more sophisticated data-driven dashboards. Done properly, these modalities strengthen national ownership and capacities, and build collaborations that promote technology and knowledge-sharing, co-investment, and shared accountability for outcomes.

(c) Examples of Specific Actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress toward multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs.

16. FAO Governing Bodies and other Intergovernmental Bodies hosted at FAO identify many specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerate progress toward multiple SDG Targets. Organized by SDG Targets covered by HLPF 2023, these include:

i. SDG 6 – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- COAG notes that crops and livestock already account for 70 percent of freshwater withdrawals and this proportion is expected to increase. Some of the most important opportunities to improve water efficiency and reduce consumption will be through building resilience of farming communities to drought and floods, applying clean water technologies, and monitoring water resource use and stress levels.
- COAG draws attention to *The State of the World's Land and Water resources for Food and Agriculture (SOLAW21)*, which highlights the importance of a paradigm shift toward more sustainable agrifood systems, to be achieved in part through more inclusive and effective governance of water tenure.
- COFO notes the several actions to strengthen collective action in relation to water: the development of science-based management guidance such as the *Guide to forest-water management*; development of state-of-the-art monitoring tools such as the *Forest and Landscape Water Ecosystems Services* tool and the *SEPAL Resilient rivers and basins* beta application.
- CFS highlights, *inter alia*, its *Policy Recommendations on Water for Food Security and Nutrition*, agreed in 2015, which contains eight detailed recommendations, as well as several other reports, guidelines, and policy recommendations with important links to SDG 6.

ii. SDG 7 – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all

- COAG notes the vital importance of access to energy for achieving food security and improving nutrition. It highlights a range of initiatives to improve energy efficiency, increasing use of renewable energy, and promoting a water-food-energy nexus approach.
- CFS highlights its *Policy Recommendations on Biofuels and Food Security*, agreed in 2013, which highlight actions in three areas – policy coherence on food security and biofuels; promoting research and development (R&D) on biofuels and food security; addressing linkages between energy and food security.

iii. SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- COAG notes that FAO promotes sustainable development in rural communities through investments in transportation, storage, irrigation, and communications technologies. Main initiatives include SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction; the *Sustainable Food Value Chains Knowledge Platform*, and *Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization*.
- CFS highlights the relevance of several agreed policy documents, including *inter alia*: Policy recommendations on *Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition*, agreed in 2022; *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition*, agreed in 2021 (which emphasize the importance of investment in infrastructure for food systems); *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security*, agreed in 2012; and *Policy Recommendations on connecting Smallholders to Markets*, agreed in 2016.

iv. SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- COAG promotes a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach to address urban resilience and supports countries and their local governments through several initiatives, including *Food for the Cities Programme*, *Urban Food Action Platform*, *Urban and Peri-urban Forestry*, and the *Green Cities Initiative* as well as the global multi-stakeholder platforms: *Milan Urban Food Policy Pact* and the *Urban Food Systems Coalition*.
- COFO recommends to (i) increase knowledge transfer and exchange on urban and peri-urban forests and trees through active participation in regional technical networks; and (ii) foster intersectoral coordination between the various levels of governments to develop policies and urban planning approaches that fully exploit the potential contribution of urban and peri-urban forests to SDGs 11 and 15.
- In *Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition*, CFS invites governments and other authorities along with other stakeholders to “Govern territories and landscapes at appropriate levels and in an inclusive way, with particular attention to people in vulnerable situations, so as to respond to local needs.”

v. SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

- COFO highlights the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) in supporting the *UN Strategic Plan on Forests*. The CPF is currently comprised of 15 international organizations, institutions and secretariats that have substantial programmes on forests.
- COFI highlights the potential of FAO’s *Blue Transformation* programme as a mechanism for bringing together governments, agencies, small fishers, larger private sector and dependent communities to leverage existing and emerging

knowledge, tools and practices to support transition to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable aquatic food systems.

- CFS highlights the need, recognized in several agreed guidelines and policy recommendations, to strengthen country-owned governance, including policy, partnerships and institutional arrangements, by making it more inclusive and participatory, evidence- and knowledge-based, giving special emphasis to the representation of small producers, and especially women, through their own organizations.
- CAC notes the importance of new efforts to develop guidance and standards to enable Members to address issues as they arise, in particular development of standards to enhance food trade and food control in times of crisis such as the development of guidance on remote audit and verification and paperless exchange of certificates.
- ITPGRFA notes positive developments from the COVID-19 response, including the increased digitalization of capacity building and training materials and the strengthening of local sourcing of seeds for communities. Some Benefit-sharing Fund projects, it also notes, set in place some mitigation measures and contingency plans to address the impacts of COVID-19: strengthening or establishing government acquisition or procurement plans for quality seeds from farmer-producers and subsequent distribution; integrating PGRFA management in programmes to strengthen local crop diversification strategies; addressing gaps in local seed supply systems.

(d) Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental bodies, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

17. Summing up, the situation at the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is decidedly mixed. A perfect storm of environmental, ecosystem and natural resource destruction or degradation, climate change and recurring extreme weather events, conflicts and crises – and, most recently, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine, each with far-reaching impacts - have presented formidable challenges for ending poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and threatens progress to protect and restore the global ecosystems that sustain life. Progress on eradicating poverty, ending hunger and improving nutrition that was notable prior to 2015 has been reversed, at least temporarily, and the best projections suggest that, even with recovery from the pandemic, there will likely be little to no improvement in several key indicators by 2030 unless there are accelerated, ambitious and transformative actions.

18. At the same time, however, in the face of daunting events, there has been a revival of common purpose and ambition in the form of a new conception of agrifood systems transformation as the organizing principle and motivation for larger scale, more effective collective action to achieve SDGs 1, 2 and 10. The new conception provides a conceptual bridge between humanitarian and development approaches and suggests a pathway to a long-term exit from protracted crises that are both cause and consequence of disruptions of agrifood systems.

19. Agrifood systems transformation also provides a compelling analytical framework for systematically combining all three pillars of sustainable development, identifying interactions among diverse policy measures, and addressing trade-offs and maximizing co-benefits. It creates a context for

evidence- and science-based modeling and analysis at all levels, from global to local, and makes it possible to determine pathways, responsibility and accountability for outcomes and impacts. These are fundamental changes in the way we approach the subjects of poverty, food security and nutrition, and inequality.

20. The new systems-oriented approach cannot be implemented without more inclusive, expansive and capable partnerships or without scaled-up and targeted investment, the driver of transformative change. The United Nations development system – the Rome-based UN agencies particularly in the context of agrifood systems transformation, but with vital contributions from nearly all other relevant UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes – has a highly specialized, catalytic role to play as a provider of high-quality data, tools, analysis and norms, as a neutral advocate and convenor, and as an enabler of larger material contributions by others.

21. The framework of agrifood systems transformation, as was demonstrated in the Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit 2021, and its preparatory and follow-up processes provides many points of entry, embraces many perspectives and many roles, and requires the commitment and determination of many active partners. It lets people from all walks of life understand how sustainable development of agrifood systems can happen – and what responsibility each of us must accept.

22. We are now at the midpoint of 15 years of the 2030 Agenda and in the third year of the Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs. This is not enough time to reach all the SDGs, but more than enough time to demonstrate that we have found our line of sight and that we maintain our resolve.

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

23. In our journey to eradicate poverty, end hunger and all forms of malnutrition, and reduce inequality within and between countries through agrifood systems transformation, we have faced enormous, unprecedented challenges during the last five years and have learned hard lessons about the immensity of the task we have chosen.

24. The context has been one of interconnected crises – of recurring economic upheavals, biodiversity loss, ecosystem destruction, natural resource degradation and depletion, climate change and extreme weather impacts, sharpening conflict and protracted crisis, a global pandemic with massive socioeconomic shocks, and now the war in Ukraine and a return to global economic inflation, deceleration and turbulence.

25. Agrifood systems have been enmeshed as either cause or effect and often both, in each of these crises. We now recognize that transforming agrifood systems can do much more than fix these systems – it can also repair our health and our relations with each other and with our troubled planet. Transforming agrifood systems could positively influence the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

26. National ownership and leadership are vital and must be fortified with data, analysis, evidence and policy discretion, with partnerships that bring science, technology, innovation, know-how and, above all, with investment. To make it viable, we need a robust Food Finance Architecture to socialize risk for a world at risk.

27. Agrifood systems bind us all – people, plants, animals, forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, fisheries and oceans. Agrifood systems transformation must be the work of all people, for all people. Women, youth, men, Indigenous Peoples, nomads, the vulnerable and excluded, those who have resources and those who need them, those who have power and those who must be empowered.