High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2025

"Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science-and-evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind"

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4. Impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body.

The multiple and interconnected crises – including hunger and malnutrition, increasing intensity and frequency of extreme climate events, geopolitical tensions, and economic setbacks – have resulted in multidimensional and profound development setbacks and hindered progress to achieve the SDGs. They have also exposed governance weaknesses and inequalities in global agrifood systems, including within and among countries and population groups. Agrifood systems are among the first and the most impacted by the crises, and their lack of capacity to deliver and ensure access to healthy diets for all has direct negative consequences on food security and nutrition, lives and well-being, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, as well as on deterioration of nature, with difficulties in revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development.

The 2024 edition of "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World" (SOFI) recalls that hunger and food insecurity remain above pre-COVID-19-pandemic levels. In 2023, about 733 million people (9.1 % of the global population) faced chronic hunger, up from 581 million people (7.5 percent) in 2019. Updated projections show that 582 million people will be chronically undernourished in 2030. In 2023, an estimated 2.33 billion people (28.9 percent of the global population) were moderately or severely food insecure, meaning they did not have regular access to adequate food. A comparison of the food insecurity status of men and women shows that the prevalence of food insecurity has remained consistently higher among women than among men, globally and in all regions, since data first became available in 2015, although the gender gap has narrowed in most regions in the last two years. The number of people in the world unable to afford a healthy diet fell for two consecutive years, from 2020 to 2022. But, worldwide, an estimated 35.4 percent of people in the world (2.83 billion) still were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2022, compared with 36.4 percent (2.88 billion) in 2021.

According to the FAO report on "Status of Women in Agrifood Systems", despite their importance for rural economies, women continue to face considerable barriers to accessing resources, technology, education, training and economic opportunities. Closing the gender gap in farm productivity could boost global GDP by nearly USD 1 trillion and reduce food insecurity for 45 million people.

Referring to the SDGs under review in 2025, sectoral analysis and recommendations were made by FAO Technical Committees and other intergovernmental bodies (Committee on Commodity Problems/CCP; Committee on Agriculture/COAG; Committee on Forestry/COFI; Committee on Fisheries/COFI; Codex Alimentarius Commission/CAC, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture / Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture ITPGRFA/CGRFA). All confirmed increasing challenges and impacts of multiple crises affecting food, gender equality, decent jobs and economic growth, natural resources, genetic resources, health and trade systems across agriculture and food sectors. Individual submissions by the respective technical committees and intergovernmental bodies hosted by FAO highlight how these impacts have been felt in different sectors.

5. Three key areas where sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.

Despite the complexity of the global challenges and impacts of multiple crises, the global response during the past year bears promise to advance progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Three key areas in which this is visible are:

i) advancement of a holistic and integrated approaches that recognize the interdependence of economic, social and environmental actions for sustainable and resilient development leaving no one behind;
ii) collection of and access to data, analysis and evidence to inform decisions and enable systemic approach.
iii) Effective promotion of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to address multiple global challenges and threats, while advancing gender equality across all sustainability dimensions.

FAO has contributed to these efforts.

First, FAO has provided support to several key global mechanisms (including the SDG Summit, COP 29, the G20 Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, among others) seeking to advance holistic and integrated approaches to address complex global challenges, multiple crises and bring results at scale. FAO is hosting the support mechanism of the Global Alliance. The support mechanism will maintain an operative online platform with streamlined access to knowledge and support channels for Alliance member countries regarding policy implementation, curate and maintain the reference basket of policy instruments, support the organization of global events against hunger and poverty, facilitate the brokering and nurturing flexible partnerships between national governments wishing to deliver on their commitments to implement policies in the reference policy basket on one side, and other Global Alliance members that can provide financial or technical support, on the other. FAO also works to develop and launch a Financing for Shock-Driven Food Crisis Facility (FSFC) in coordination with WFP and UN OCHA, that can involve private capital from global insurance markets and provide rapid-response financing in anticipation of severe food crises. This facility will bring one of the preventive dimensions needed to enhance resilience among the most vulnerable. With the aim of promoting greater alignment of policy and outcomes on gender, FAO has launched Commit to Grow Equality (CGE), a mechanism to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment in agrifood systems through financing, investments and partnerships by enabling a diverse range of actors to report against a strategic set of commitments.

FAO is also contributing to the Food Systems Countdown Initiative (FSCI). The new FSCI report on "Governance and resilience as entry points for transforming food systems in the countdown to 2030, published in January 2025 reveals a mix of encouraging advancements and concerning setbacks, pointing out that with stronger governance and better data key tradeoffs can be mitigated and even flipped into synergies. In February 2025, FAO hosted the resumed sessions of the UN Biodiversity Conference, including the Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP16). Hosting COP 16 at FAO Headquarters sent a clear signal of the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity across all sectors through a comprehensive 'whole-of-society' and 'whole-of-government' approach. FAO also actively promotes the One Health approach as part of agrifood system transformation for the health of people, animals, plants and the environment, contributing to healthy lives and wellbeing for all.

Second, FAO provides a trusted structure for aggregating, analyzing and disseminating data on food and agriculture from many sources. Data and statistics are fundamental for evidence-based decision making, incentivizing action, and sustaining commitment by demonstrating progress, and therefore for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. FAO's contribution includes country driven global assessments (*State of the World reports* – on food and agriculture, on food insecurity and nutrition, on agricultural commodity markets, on forests, on fisheries, on genetic resources) that inform related global policy instruments. The Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM) with its geospatial platform and a registry of restoration initiatives allows to track global progress and disseminate good practices for the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and supports countries in reporting areas under restoration for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 2. The Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) contributed to enhancing agricultural market transparency and responses for food security, reducing extreme price volatility, and promoting coordinated policy action. FAO's monitoring and reporting on the SDG 14 indicators under its custodianship, enhanced Members' work to track their progress on SDG 14 indicators and those SDG targets that directly impact small-scale fisheries.

Third, at the heart of FAO's vision lies the conviction that harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI) is key for building more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable systems and leveraging opportunities for achieving the SDGs. For example, the FAO's Science and Innovation Forum, launched in 2022, offers a platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among scientists, innovators, policymakers, farmers' organizations, and stakeholders from diverse sectors. It contributes to closing the STI gap in low- and middle-income countries, scaling up successful innovative solutions, and harnessing the power of behavioral science for achieving the SDGs. The Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (Multilateral System) of the ITPGRFA offers an innovative means that facilitates discussions and cooperation among stakeholders on policies, best practices, and transferring knowledge and technology to achieve better conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. FAO's work under the Blue Transformation vision is shaping novel regulatory frameworks that foster sustainable growth in fisheries and aquaculture. This vision is tangibly realized through initiatives such as the Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) and instruments like the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), supporting countries to maximize the contribution of aquatic food systems to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

6. Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress.

The following three examples are particularly promising for seizing synergistic opportunities to bring progress to scale across six key transitions:

First, facilitating coordination of interventions for agrifood systems transformation with robust bioeconomy, inequality and youth actions. In collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), FAO facilitated the Thematic Youth Assembly on Supporting Women and Girls in Decent Rural Employment. The event aimed to start a year-long process of knowledge exchange, consultations and collaboration among youth, experts and policymakers for concrete action steps towards supporting and empowering youth, women and girls in securing sustainable rural employment opportunities, leading to improved livelihoods and economic wellbeing. The FAO's Forestry Roadmap – From Vision to Action 2024-2031 guides its support to countries to meet SDGs and address major global challenges. The 2024 Bioenergy Week, organized by FAO in the context of the Global Bioenergy Partnership, enhanced learning

from positive experiences in sustainable bioenergy production and use within agrifood systems, and fostered dialogue with the private sector and other stakeholders to improve cooperation towards a clean energy transition. The FAO-UNESCO-UNITAR partnership is contributing to education transition through the Facility for Action for Climate Empowerment to achieve Nationally Determined Contributions. The project provides tailored climate education materials, capacity building support, and strengthens informal education systems. FAO's COAG recognized the need to initiate a multistakeholder global bioeconomy partnership for sustainable agrifood systems to serve as a catalyst for the development of policies, strategies, and plans, and building capacities, knowledge systems, and incentives at all levels. Furthermore, COAG encouraged FAO to develop a proposal to this end, including the envisaged engagement of Members, UN entities and other stakeholders, as appropriate, to be presented for consideration at a future FAO Council Session.

Second, facilitating mobilization and scaling up of responsible and equitable investments for sustainable development and agrifood systems transformation. The FAO policy brief on Repurposing domestic public support for agriculture underlines that public support to agrifood systems can disproportionately benefit larger, richer farmers, failing to meet stated goals of reducing inequality and increasing income for lower-income households. By strategically directing resources within national economies and optimizing existing subsidy frameworks, public support can be used to reduce GHG emissions from agricultural production and safeguard biodiversity while improving equity and promoting access to healthier diets. Facilitating partnerships and innovative initiatives to increase responsible and sustainable private sector investments in food and agriculture, including instruments like blended finance, is also needed. For example, the FAO Hand in Hand Initiative currently being implemented in 73 countries offers opportunities to establish partnerships between member countries, investors, and key actors in the field of development, with an emphasis on agrifood systems transformation. Putting in place policy and legal frameworks that facilitate the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources for food and agriculture, in line with the Multilateral System of International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), contributes to ensuring equitable and sustainable economic development, human health, livelihoods and well-being leaving no one behind. The Organization also supports member countries to increase women farm productivity and wages within agrifood systems. This could boost the global domestic product by 1 percent, representing nearly US$1 trillion, and decrease global food insecurity levels, leading to 45 million more people being food-secure, according to the 2023 FAO status of women in agrifood systems report.

Third, bridging the science, technology and innovation divides and their responsible use as drivers of sustainable development. FAO's major contributions include promoting digital technologies for agrifood systems transformation – with initiatives to harness mobile technology, remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and other digital tools to support farmers in decision-making, crop management, and natural resource conservation, and enhancing digital literacy and technical skills among farmers, extension workers, and agricultural professionals. The global E-Agriculture Community offers a collaborative platform for stakeholders to share knowledge and innovative solutions in using ICTs for agriculture and rural development. Addressing the risks, such as inequality, in access to technology and innovation including sustainable agricultural mechanization and digitalization is critical. It requires creating enabling environments, mobilizing financial, scientific and technical resources, and improving capacities of agrifood innovation systems at the national level that are tailored to local needs and contexts. Other relevant measures promoted by FAO include improving knowledge of and strengthening potential of neglected and underutilized species (NUS) that offer significant opportunities for improving agricultural sustainability and dietary diversity.

FAO also supports farmers by introducing innovative renewable energy technologies, such as bioenergy and sustainable cold chains, that enhance productivity while minimizing food loss and waste. The Atoms4Food, an initiative launched with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), promotes leveraging nuclear technologies alongside advanced agricultural techniques.

7. Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

FAO, in collaboration with other UN agencies and partners, has a highly catalytic role in supporting implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit as well as the Pact for the Future, including its Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations, as a provider of high-quality data, tools, analysis, norms and standards, and as a neutral advocate and convenor and an enabler of contributions by others.

Recognizing the rapid advances in technology and to ensure no one is left behind, in 2024, the CAC adopted Guidelines on the use of technology to provide food information in food labelling and on pre-packaged foods offered by e-commerce and agreed new work on principles for digitalization of national food control systems. FAO is actively engaged in providing technical and policy support to countries in implementing its Conceptual Framework for Integrated Land and Water Resources Management, including by encouraging them to engage in the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure. With a view to advancing science- and evidence-based solutions for sustainable development, FAO will also continue the process of further development of the proposed Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Sustainable Use and Management of Plastics in Agriculture (VCoC), in consultation with its Members, including after the adoption of a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution, while acknowledging Members' decisions to utilize the proposed VCoC in their national contexts. It will also continue engaging, as an observer and within its mandate, with the intergovernmental negotiating committee on plastic pollution to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution (established by the UN Environment Assembly Resolution UNEP/EA.5/Res.14 on *End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument*) by providing guidance on the issues of plastics used in agriculture.

The development, led by FAO in consultation with member countries, of a Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Livestock Transformation with an integrated approach covering all livestock production systems, will provide holistic guidance for action-oriented mechanisms for sustainable livestock transformation and their contribution to SDGs.

Relating to commitments on climate action, FAO enhanced its technical and policy support for addressing the interconnected challenges of increased intensity and frequency of extreme climate events, biodiversity, food security, and nutrition. This approach emphasizes the equal importance of each dimension and the need for balanced, context-specific solutions. The Organization also continues providing technical support to identify investment opportunities and policy options to address critical barriers to accelerating progress on SDGs, contributing to initiatives like the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty.

Involving 35 members and 8 observers, the Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation (FAST) Partnership, hosted at FAO, works at the intersection of climate action, agrifood systems, and finance to tackle global challenges and align with COP 29 initiatives.

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8. Recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF.

Agrifood systems bind us all – people, plants, animals, forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, fisheries and oceans. Fostering efforts and investments in governance, institutions and capabilities for agrifood systems transformation can accelerate the realization of SDGs and contribute to more peaceful, inclusive and just societies. Agrifood systems transformation has been identified as a critical synergetic SDG accelerator and one of the six key pathways towards achieving all 17 SDGs.

Accelerate efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems transformation as a strategic opportunity to develop and implement coordinated responses to the global crises of pollution, biodiversity loss, and increasing intensity and frequency of extreme climate events, all of which have direct implications for human health and wellbeing. Responsible agrifood production, including through appropriate regulatory and policy frameworks, can reduce unsafe chemical exposure, curb antimicrobial resistance, prevent pathogen spillover, and mitigate ecosystem degradation that threatens food security and livelihoods.

Upscale proven interventions to address the structural and gender-based constraints in resources, finance, assets, services, work and productivity, as well as to change discriminatory social norms, policies and laws that perpetuate gender inequality.

Invest in Youth to unlock the future by not only implementing targeted strategies such as modernizing agricultural education, integrating work-based learning, and supporting youth-led agribusinesses but also ensuring the creation of the required decent employment opportunities from the onset is crucial for unlocking their potential. Work-based learning, mentorship programs, peer support, and market access initiatives empower youth, while cooperatives and networks expand their resources and agency. Emphasis should be placed on empowering young women, supporting vulnerable groups, and implementing employment-intensive initiatives in fragile contexts to foster resilience.

Promote and strengthen effective and sustainable management as conservation tool for aquatic food systems and foster international and regional cooperation to tackle illegal, as well as Unreported and Unregulated fisheries. Improved implementation of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement and related instruments as well as the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, and their integration into ocean-focused strategies, supported by innovative and collaborative solutions are crucial to address escalating environmental pressures.

Strengthen collective action and partnerships to mobilize greater and more effective public and private investment in developing countries from multiple sources. Enhanced cooperation models should be established among key financing actors in the agrifood system to derisk investments through knowledge, technical expertise, and innovation. This includes innovative finance – such as impact investing, fintech, blended finance, and other de-risking instruments – and carbon finance, all of which help crowd more private investment flows and bridge the financing gap for small-scale farmers and SMEs.

Promote an open, fair, predictable, and non-discriminatory, inclusive and rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, for countries to benefit from international trade. Ensuring market transparency and timely and objective market information, particularly in view of the increasing risks and uncertainties caused by conflicts, climate variability, pests and diseases, and economic shocks is an important catalyst to improve multilateral trade and strengthen resilience to socio-economic shocks, conflicts, pandemics, and extreme weather events.

Improve the uptake and the scaling up of technology and social, policy, institutional and financial innovations as a powerful engine to end hunger and malnutrition, and boost climate action. Science is the bedrock of progress and innovation. Transformative governance and strengthening the science-policy interface is also critical for greater policy coherence, shared ownership and collective action.

Strengthen inclusive and equitable partnerships and collaboration among governments, business, academia, and civil society to develop sustainable and inclusive solutions with real impact ensuring sustainable development leaving no one behind.