



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



Hand-in-Hand  
Initiative



## HAND-IN-HAND (HIH)

TARGETED INVESTMENTS FOR  
SUSTAINABLE AND AT-SCALE  
AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT



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HIH aims to remove the barriers to agricultural investment in low-income countries.

### Unlocking agrifood systems development potential

Investment in agrifood systems transformation catalyses sustainable development and contributes to poverty reduction. From opening new markets for smallholders to funding climate-resilient infrastructure, market-based transformation of agrifood systems can help boost economic growth, improve food security and nutrition, and champion equality, especially for the world's poorest.

Countries with low incomes and limited capacity are often rich in agricultural investment and development opportunities. All too frequently, however, investors and development partners, including the private sector, struggle to find reliable data and expert insight required to facilitate and better inform their participation in investing in these countries. National governments, meanwhile, regularly lack the partnerships with partner development agencies, banks and investors needed to implement transformational and at-scale national agrifood strategies and investment plans.

### How Hand-in-Hand works

Hand-in-Hand (HIH) is a flagship FAO Initiative designed to remove barriers to agrifood systems transformation. As a country-owned and country-led Initiative, it provides targeted and innovative support and data needed to enable governments, development partners, international financial institutions and investors to better target agrifood investments and policies for resilient, sustainable and productive agrifood systems. In this way, HIH supports countries in the acceleration of agrifood systems transformation and sustainable rural development to **eradicate poverty (SDG1), end hunger and malnutrition (SDG2) and reduce inequalities (SDG10)**. The Initiative prioritizes countries and territories where poverty and hunger, but also agricultural potential are highest, national capacities are limited, or operational difficulties are greatest due to natural or human crises.

#### Data-driven decisions

HIH provides all stakeholders with access to its **Geospatial Platform**: a comprehensive, open-access database of validated geospatial, biophysical and socioeconomic data covering around **245 countries and territories**. With over **two million data layers**, as well as advanced modelling and analytics functionalities, the platform allows governments, donors and the private sector to identify territories where agrifood investment has the greatest potential to alleviate poverty and hunger.

#### Productive partnerships

Once agrifood investment opportunities have been identified in target territories, HIH facilitates and supports government efforts to interact with donors and development partners to implement investments and interventions in specific territories as part of broader national agricultural strategies. The Initiative's **unique matchmaking opportunities** bring together national and local authorities, donors, international financial institutions, private enterprises, producer organizations, civil society organizations and research institutions to engage in and operationalize these investments. As a government-led process, partners are chosen for their ability to participate in, support and implement co-identified interventions – whether through technology, data, capacity development or financing.



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HIH marks FAO's renewed desire to promote market-base transformation of agrifood systems.

### Effective programme governance

After a government's prioritized agrifood investment plans have been developed, HIH's country-level task force provides continued support to ensure that the highest levels of leadership and transparency are maintained throughout the development and implementation of even the most complex programmes. The upgraded **HIH Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard** allows programme partners to share information, track commitments and make timely adjustments as circumstances change or new information becomes available.

## Why work with Hand-in-Hand?

### National governments

HIH has been co-developed with its member countries to address the needs of governments. The **geospatial data, technical support and capacity strengthening** that HIH provides allow national policymakers to make more informed, evidence-based decisions, maximizing the development potential of national agrifood systems. Its distinctive **matchmaking service forges effective partnerships between governments, development partners, investors and the private sector** to realize this potential in a way that reflects the interests, needs, opportunities and national priorities identified by the HIH member governments. Most importantly, it remains a **country-led Initiative**. National governments decide who to engage and work with and how programmes should be implemented. This unique approach makes HIH the first United Nations Initiative to facilitate funding for at-scale agrifood systems development ensuring the leadership of the governments in the strategic direction and management of the Initiative.

### Multilateral development banks and donors

By supporting programmes facilitated by HIH, **donors and international financial institutions know they are joining, data-driven, investments designed to maximize positive impacts** in territories specially chosen for their agrifood and market development potential. The Initiative not only impacts economic growth but helps to advance social and environmental goals, with a particular focus on alleviating poverty and hunger. Planned interventions include developing investment areas in agrifood, introducing digital services and precision agriculture, reducing food losses and waste, building efficient water management systems, and addressing climate challenges and weather risks faced by smallholders.

### Private sector

HIH marks FAO's renewed desire to work closely with the private sector to promote the sustainable market-based transformation of agrifood systems to eliminate poverty and inequality, and provide healthy and nutritious food for all. Through the HIH Geospatial Platform and matchmaking service, the Initiative provides interested investors with data, connections and expert insight needed to make informed investments in its member countries – **opening markets that were previously inaccessible**. For companies concerned with their social and environmental impact, HIH provides **evidence-based advice** for sound investment decision-making and scalable business models that will strengthen the equity, resilience and sustainability of prioritized agrifood investments.



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FAO has developed a matchmaking approach that brings together various actors to implement these investments.



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HIH prioritizes countries with high levels of poverty and hunger, and where national capacities are limited, or operational challenges are greater due to natural or human crises.

## The Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum

The HIH process culminates in the annual **Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum** which takes place at FAO Headquarters every October under the umbrella of the World Food Forum. **The event provides a platform for national governments to present investment opportunities to impact investors, multilateral development banks, foundations, the private sector, donors and other development partners.** In addition, the Forum offers the great possibility, through its matchmaking mechanism, for in-person one-to-one dialogue between investors and governments of each participating country to develop and advance sustainable agrifood investment opportunities.

For more information scan the following QR codes:



HIH website



Data Lab



HIH Geospatial Platform



HIH Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard

Want to find out more about the Initiative?



Contact the HIH team:  
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