

174th Session of the Council

Written Correspondence Procedure – inputs from Members - English version

Item 7 – Update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative

Member Name	Comments
<p>United States of America (Tuesday, 14 November 2023 – 14.49)</p>	<p>The United States thanks FAO for the update on the Hand in Hand (HIH) Initiative. We appreciate FAO’s responsiveness to Member State comments on this initiative, including increased transparency through regular updates, the communication strategy, and efforts to improve to the HIH dashboard. The United States supports evidence-based, data-driven decision making and appreciates FAO efforts to bring data to the forefront of FAO and policymakers’ decisions.</p> <p>We support FAO efforts to expand the donor base for HIH. We are interested to hear more from donors, international financial institutions, regional banks, investment and impact funds, the private sector, as well as beneficiaries regarding the value they find in the HIH Initiative. We encourage FAO to include this information in the dashboard and in other fora, as appropriate.</p> <p>Concerning the HIH dashboard, we appreciate FAO's efforts to improve the user experience based on ongoing feedback; however, we note that it is taking longer than expected to modernize the information, technology, and the monitoring processes and that the status quo does not meet the objectives of the dashboard to provide regular, real-time reporting of progress against programme milestones and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) objectives.</p> <p>Given the growing interest from countries to participate in HIH, the United States would like to better understand the metrics FAO is using to demonstrate HIH’s value and progress. The metrics are critical to understanding whether this approach continues to support countries on their pathways to meeting the SDGs. We would also like the dashboard to provide information on investments made through HIH to provide a real-time picture of the value of the initiative’s matchmaking function.</p>
<p>Costa Rica (Tuesday, 14 November 2023 – 17.46)</p>	<p>Costa Rica is grateful for the update provided in document CL/174//NF/6 on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and we appreciate the ongoing increase in the number of countries joining. We also appreciate that the Initiative has now been opened up to all countries to achieve concrete actions to transform agrifood systems. We support measures, programmes or initiatives that foster genuine poverty eradication, reduce inequality and enable authentic social inclusion through specific opportunities that reach vulnerable populations. We therefore applaud the fact that the Hand-in-Hand Initiative is one of the 12 initiatives selected by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General.</p> <p>With regard to the Central American Dry Corridor regional initiative, we are grateful for the support of the Brazilian Government. Their contribution will undoubtedly be of great help to people facing the adverse climate phenomena affecting our region, who would otherwise be negatively impacted in terms of food security, among many other environmental, social and economic consequences.</p>

	<p>Costa Rica, as part of the Dry Corridor regional initiative, will continue to work with the other countries involved, as well as with the Central American Integration System (SICA) Secretariats and Councils leading the process. We support ongoing negotiations with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to continue the initiative.</p> <p>We call on FAO to continue its technical cooperation under this Initiative and to provide support to all countries that need it, regardless of the income parameters used by the agency.</p>
<p>Colombia (Wednesday, 15 November 2023 – 16.05)</p>	<p>Colombia thanks FAO for producing this report with updated information on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, which we recently joined. We took part in the Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum for the first time in October this year. We are pleased to see that more countries have joined this Initiative, demonstrating the importance of more ambitious investments and measures for the transformation of food systems, rural development and guaranteeing the human right to food.</p> <p>The Hand-in-Hand Initiative supports the sustainable development of the dairy value chain in the most vulnerable areas of south-west Colombia, particularly in Cauca and Putumayo. These two priority departments offer high livestock potential and are home to Indigenous Peoples’ communities. The cultural and social importance of such peoples make these areas particularly suitable for implementing the programme.</p> <p>Colombia is making progress in the productive transformation of its dairy sector. We seek to bring the dairy production sector up to the levels and standards of large producers in the region, generate productive ventures that add value and improve the sector’s competitiveness, increase the net export rate, and strengthen the productivity of farming families. We agree that the Hand-in-Hand Initiative offers an innovative way of strengthening national agrifood system transformation programmes.</p> <p>Colombia is the fourth largest milk producer in Latin America after Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. The subsector is also of great importance for the national economy, accounting for 36.7 percent of livestock gross domestic product (GDP) and 700 000 direct jobs. The Hand-in-Hand Initiative is therefore a very valuable tool for speeding up the transformation of this sector, as well as for eradicating poverty and ending hunger and malnutrition in the country.</p>
<p>European Union (Wednesday, 15 November 2023 – 16.39)</p>	<p>I am honoured to write to you on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 27 Member States.</p> <p>The EU and its Member States take note of the latest progress report on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative. The Hand-in-Hand initiative complements the core activities of the Organization, and we would like to recall the continued importance of ensuring the coherence of the Initiative with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the joint programming of the UN development system and the 2030 Agenda. To achieve this, we encourage FAO to continue to closely coordinate its work on the Initiative with other relevant UN agencies and development partners, in line with its mandate.</p> <p>We acknowledge with satisfaction the information on the growth in membership and new partnerships and initiatives focused on developing and transforming food systems in adherent countries. We also welcome the development of the tools associated with Hand-in-Hand, particularly its geospatial platform, looking forward to further developments that can improve the availability of detailed data for each region, country and initiative.</p>

	<p>We would like to recall the importance of the alignment of the initiative’s private funding with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment and FAO's Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021-2025. In addition, continued attention should be given to ensuring that the Initiative has no further impact on the regular FAO budget as approved and outlined in the 2024-25 Work Programme and Budget. Finally, we thank FAO for providing information on the Initiative, as a further means of contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals within FAO's mandate, and we ask that FAO continue to provide regular updates to the FAO Council on the progress made in implementing the Initiative and the results achieved. Particularly, we look forward to getting more information on the outcomes of the 2023 Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum (1720 October 2023, Rome).</p>
<p>Australia (Thursday, 16 November 2023 – 13.58)</p>	<p>Australia appreciates the update on the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative. We note the growth in the number of countries participating in the HIH Initiative and encourage FAO to continue to identify and maximise potential partnerships and investment opportunities, particularly in the Southwest Pacific region.</p> <p>We observe that FAO is planning further support, in collaboration with the FAO Subregional and Regional Offices, for Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to develop human capital and maximise the use and application of HIH Geospatial Platform and tools. We would appreciate further information on these plans as and when they become available.</p> <p>We note the increased investment interest in the HIH initiatives, and particularly the strong attendance at the HIH Investment Forum in October. We appreciate the efforts made to bring Members to the Forum to present their Investment Plans. We note however that adequate support must be provided to delegations without a permanent mission in Rome to allow them to maximise the opportunities for engagements.</p> <p>We recognise the ongoing rollout of the HIH communication strategy, and we emphasise the value in regular engagement and coordination with existing development and resource partners in-country to help maximise synergies and prevent duplication and/or misalignment of objectives across programmes and investments. With this in mind, we note recent efforts to engage with other initiatives and corporate efforts across FAO, and would appreciate further detail of such collaborations.</p> <p>We encourage the ongoing development and upgrading of the monitoring and evaluation dashboard including implementation of developments to improve user experience. We continue to request the inclusion of the monitoring and evaluation elements in the dashboard so that information on evaluation processes and outcomes are accessible to allow users to understand and assess the impact of the initiative.</p>
<p>Chile (Wednesday, 22 November 2023 – 15.50)</p>	<p>Chile appreciates the update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative (HIH). In particular, it shares the global interest and the opportunities that this Initiative represents to highlight avenues for concrete investments to foster the transformation of agrifood systems.</p> <p>We are conducting negotiations in conjunction with the FAO Chile office to allow our nation to join the Initiative as a beneficiary. Our aim is to accelerate the transformation of agrifood systems at national level and smooth our path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</p>

	<p>We will seek technical support through FAO Chile in order to develop a pilot project in Chile for the second version of the Hand-in Hand Initiative, together with the Office of Agricultural Studies and Policies (ODEPA). We are also committed to mobilizing human and financial resources to support the pilot. The relevance, amount and use/purpose of the resources remain to be defined.</p>
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