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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная организация  
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las  
Naciones Unidas para la  
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة  
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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

## Thirty-first Session

26-28 October 2020<sup>1</sup>

## Provisional Annotated Agenda

### A-SENIOR OFFICERS MEETING

26 October 2020

#### I. Introductory Items

- 1) Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, and Appointment of Rapporteur
- 2) Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

*(Please see Ministerial Session items from 3 to 17 on page 6)*

#### II. Regional and Policy Matters

#### **18) Building Resilient Food and Agriculture Systems in the Context of Overlapping Multiple Crises (COVID-19, Climate Change, Transboundary Pests and Diseases, Conflicts and Economic Downturns): Addressing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in Africa**

The prevalence of undernourishment (PoU) in sub-Saharan Africa has been on the rise in the past five years, reaching 22 percent in 2019 (up from 21.2 percent in 2015). As a result, there were 235 million undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa in 2019, an increase of 15.6 percent compared to 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa now stands out as the only region of the world where the

<sup>1</sup> Rescheduled from 23-27 March 2020, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

number of extreme poor increased (from 276 million in 1990 to 413 million in 2015). The situation has been further compounded by the dual crises of the worst desert locust outbreak in the region in 25 years and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent joint analysis conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) identified 15 African countries that are on the frontline of impending COVID-19-driven food crises, as the pandemic's effects aggravate pre-existing drivers of hunger.

Resilience provides a conceptual and analytical framework for achieving a tangible collective outcome that brings together actors across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to ensure food security and sustainable agrifood systems in the face of shocks and crises. There is an urgent need to build resilience in a coordinated, coherent and efficient manner, working across humanitarian, development and peace approaches.

### **19) Progress on FAO's Regional Programme in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Towards Development of an Action Programme to Address Food Security and Nutrition Challenges in Landlocked Countries (LLCs) in Africa**

The FAO African SIDS Regional Programme was launched during the 30th Session of the Regional Conference for Africa (ARC 30) in 2018, in the Sudan. This session provides updates on progress in implementation of the programme since. ARC 30 also recommended that consideration be given to a framework for landlocked food-deficit countries inspired by the SIDS programme while distinguishing the differentiated needs of both categories of countries.

Landlocked countries in Africa are currently facing complex and multifaceted challenges that contribute to worsening trends in food security and nutrition. This is due mainly to their fragile natural environments, high vulnerability to climate change, external economic shocks and natural disasters, long distances from external markets and, in some cases, conflict. This session discusses key issues for the development of an action programme to address food security and nutrition challenges in landlocked African countries. It will also provide guidance and a framework within which FAO will work with SIDS and landlocked African countries and their development partners to better articulate and work towards coordinated actions to address food security and nutrition challenges at local, national, regional and global levels.

## **III. Programme and Budget Matters**

### **20) Results and Priorities for FAO in the Africa Region, including feedback on Subregional Priorities and Africa Region Synthesis Report 2014-2019**

The Regional Conference will consider how FAO activities have addressed previously agreed regional priorities during the 2018-2019 biennium and will provide guidance on areas of regional priority for 2020-2021 and beyond, within the context of FAO's Strategic Priorities, including the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, Innovation and Digitalization, Food Systems Transformation.

The discussion will be informed by the results of FAO's work in the region, the Medium Term Plan 2018-21, the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-2021, as well as the priorities identified and recommendations of Members and FAO. Furthermore, priorities of partners such as the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector will also be considered. The FAO Secretariat will provide an overview of the results achieved through the Regional Initiatives, including lessons learned. The Regional Initiatives serve as a mechanism to ensure effective delivery and impact of FAO's work on the key priorities of the region contributing to the Strategic Objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Annex 5 of the Results and Priorities paper presents an update on the development of FAO's new Strategic Framework. This document facilitates guidance from the Regional Conference on priorities to be reflected in the development of FAO's new Strategic Framework, which will be presented to the

Governing Bodies at their first Sessions in 2021. A roadmap for consultation on the FAO Strategic Framework, from June 2020 to July 2021, is presented.

The Programme Committee at its 125th Session (November 2018) invited the FAO Office of Evaluation to prepare a synthesis of completed evaluations and share these with the FAO Regional Conferences in 2020. This report is a synthesis of results, issues and lessons learned from evaluations undertaken in the period 2014-2019 with regard to FAO's support to the Africa region and is presented to the ARC to inform discussion on FAO's contribution to results in the region.

## **21) Multi-year Programme of Work 2020-2023 for the Regional Conference for Africa**

All FAO Regional Conferences prepare a Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) covering a period of at least four years. This document presents the MYPOW for the ARC for the period of 2020-2023. It aims to continue efforts to strengthen communication of programme outcomes with the Africa Group of Permanent Representatives to FAO, the AU and the RECs. The MYPOW describes the overall objectives, results and mechanisms underlying the operations of the ARC for the coming years.

## **22) Decentralized Offices Network**

The paper discusses the progress, challenges and opportunities for FAO's decentralization policy, taking into consideration the conclusions of the 164th and 159th Sessions of the FAO Council (July 2020 and June 2018) and the 41st Session of the FAO Conference (June 2019) on the need to continue efforts to strengthen the technical capacity of the Organization. The session will consider the recommendations of the Evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework (2019), the Internal Review of FAO Regional Structures carried out in 2018-2019, and the progress made in the implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution RES/A/72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations (UN) development system launched in January 2019 across the region, as well as the challenges and changes triggered by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **IV. Other Items**

### **23) Date and Place of the 32nd Session of the Regional Conference for Africa**

### **24) Any Other Business**

Preparation, discussion and approval of a draft report of the Regional Conference for consideration and adoption by the Ministerial Session.

## **INFORMATION DOCUMENTS<sup>2</sup>**

### **a) Summary Report of Recommendations of FAO Regional Statutory Bodies (statistics, wildlife/forestry, fisheries)**

Regional statutory bodies in statistics, forestry and wildlife, fisheries and agricultural have regular consultations with documented recommendations that are summarized for information of the Regional Conference.

The 26th Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS) (Libreville, Gabon, November 2019) reviewed the main conclusions and recommendations of the 25th Session of AFCAS (Entebbe, Uganda, November 2017). The AFCAS also discussed FAO activities in food and agriculture statistics relevant to African countries since the 25th Session of AFCAS, as well as progress made on the implementation of the SDG indicators; the implementation of the Strategy for Improving

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<sup>2</sup> If they so wish, delegates may comment on information notes under "Any Other Business."

Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Africa, including the Agricultural and Rural Integrated Survey Initiative; and the implementation of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020.

The African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) section summarizes the outcomes and recommendations of the 21st Session of the AFWC, held in June 2018, and the 22nd Session held in March 2020. Topics included a high-level cross-sectoral dialogue between forestry and relevant sectors and the promotion of increased investment in forestry and wildlife sustainable management. Priority topics also included African countries' commitments through the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative. It calls for the restoration of 100 million hectares by 2030; dryland sustainable management and restoration through expansion of the AU-led Great Green Wall concept, and support to the development of climate-smart forestry-related value chains. FAO supported African countries by mobilizing resources under Global Environment Facility-7 and the Green Climate Fund.

The Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic discussed the assessment and management advice from the 8th Session of the Scientific Subcommittee, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (October 2018). The discussions stressed the continued need to improve research and data collection in the region, to review the format of scientific advice and the management recommendations and to enhance the dialogue between scientists and managers.

#### **b) Reporting on the Recommendations of the 30th Session of the Regional Conference for Africa**

Following the recommendations of ARC 30, the report shows the results achieved in Africa during the biennium 2018-2019 and the implementation of the recommendations of ARC 30.

#### **c) Concept Note on Actualizing Inclusive Food Systems Transformation in Africa, through Leveraging Innovation and Digitalization: Toward UN Food Systems Summit 2021**

To achieve SDGs 1 and 2 (ending poverty, hunger and all forms of malnutrition), food systems will need to deliver reliable food security and nutrition for all and be economically profitable, but they will also need to have a positive or neutral impact on the climate, biodiversity, and the natural resource environment. They will also need to meet rapidly growing food demand in an increasingly urbanized world, and they will need to evolve in ways that ensure that those least advantaged – the poor – are not left behind. Moreover, they will need to promote and enable healthy diets.

Technology and digital innovations should be leveraged to achieve these goals. Digital tools provide huge opportunities for integrating producers in a digitally driven agrifood system and improving productivity, reducing time and cost of operations, and contributing to quality and safety of food products. Furthermore, the FAO guidelines, "Transforming Food and Agriculture to Achieve the SDGs: 20 Actions" provide practical approaches, practices, policies and tools that support transformation to achieve multiple SDGs. These guidelines are designed to help countries mainstream sustainable food and agriculture in their strategies, policies and investment plans, including the National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs).

The UN Secretary-General is committed to enhance recognition and appreciation among Members of the need to embrace a holistic approach and pursue accelerated actions along food systems transformation to achieve the Agenda 2030. Many independent initiatives of governments, private sector and civil society that have emerged in support of more sustainable food systems lack a common framing of the complex interactions, dependencies and trade-offs intrinsic to food systems. This is constraining the ability of societies with different priorities, and with different agro-ecological and institutional potentials, to identify and implement appropriate pathways towards more sustainable food systems.

**d) Outcomes of the Africa Food Security Leadership Dialogue (Kigali, Rwanda, August 2019)**

Convened and coordinated through a partnership of the AU with four multilateral agencies (the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and FAO), the Africa Food Security Leadership Dialogue aimed to strengthen the coordination of development partners and regional efforts to support countries to accelerate progress towards their collective food and nutrition security goals as envisioned in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). The Dialogue has proceeded with a series of meetings to convene senior officials and leaders of key organizations that are supporting major food security programmes in Africa.

**e) United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)**

This document provides an update on progress made in implementing the Decade, in particular on the main means of implementation such as country commitments for action on nutrition and country-led Action Networks. Moreover, the document addresses the preparatory process of the upcoming mid-term review of the decade.

**f) Update of the Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition**

In April 2019, the 161st Session of the FAO Council endorsed a recommendation for the development of an updated Vision and Strategy for FAO's work in nutrition. The updated Vision and Strategy considers: 1) all forms of malnutrition; 2) food systems over and beyond nutrition-sensitive agriculture; and 3) the current global context building on the outcomes of the Second International Conference on Nutrition, the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and its Framework for Action, and the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition. It will also include a robust implementation plan and accountability framework, and takes into account context- or region-specific considerations.

**g) Food Loss and Waste Measurement Linked to the Food Loss Analysis Methodology**

This paper documents FAO's initiatives to support countries in collecting data toward monitoring progress, and informing policy and actions to reduce food losses and waste, toward achieving SDG target 12.3.

**h) Outcomes of Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF) Round Table of Contributors (11 June 2019, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea)**

Launched in 2013, the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF) is a unique financing mechanism that pools resources from African countries to support critical national and regional initiatives on food and agriculture. It is one of the most successful stories of Africa's partnership with FAO. Its main goal is to assist countries to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, eliminate rural poverty and manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

**i) International Year of Plant Health**

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2020 the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). The IYPH is a unique opportunity to draw attention to the serious threat of plant pests and diseases to global food and nutrition security and economic development, and to promote plant protection activities and highlight the importance of international collaborative work on preventing the spread of pests and diseases.

**j) Progress Made on the Global Action Programme (GAP) for Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of Africa Region**

The Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States (GAP) was officially launched during the 40th Session of the FAO Conference. FAO delivers its contribution to the implementation of the GAP through the Interregional Initiative (IRI) on SIDS. This paper provides an update on progress and impacts.

**k) Concept Note on the COVID-19 and Its Impact on Agri-food Systems, Food Security and Nutrition: Implications and Priorities for the Africa Region**

The outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, measures put in place to control or mitigate its impact, and the economic recession induced by the crisis are worsening the food and security situation in sub-Saharan Africa and halted a period of economic growth registered in many countries during 2019. The concept note outlines how COVID-19 has become a significant threat to ending extreme poverty and eradicating hunger in Africa, and sets out priority areas of work to address these challenges.

**l) Concept Note on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative for Enhanced Results and Impact on Poverty, Hunger and Malnutrition in Africa**

In 2019, FAO launched the Hand-in-Hand Initiative to end poverty and hunger in those countries that lacked resources and capabilities to do achieve SDGs 1 and 2 on their own, or that have been hit especially hard by conflict, crisis, or climate change. This Initiative is evidence-based, country-owned and country-led and prioritize accelerating agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development. Twenty-seven countries have joined the Initiative as beneficiaries, and several more countries have indicated that they expect to be joining soon.

## **B - MINISTERIAL SESSION**

27-28 October 2020

**3) Statement by the Director-General**

**4) Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council**

**5) Statement by the Chairperson of the 30th Session of the Regional Conference for Africa**

The statement of the Chairperson of ARC 30 will provide information on his mandate and on matters related to the Africa region.

**6) Statement by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator**

**7) Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**

The CFS Chairperson will provide an overview of the main outcomes of the recent Plenary Sessions.

**8) Statement by the African Union Commission**

## **9) Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Organizations**

Statement by the representative of the Civil Society Organizations summarizing results of their consultations organized prior to the Regional Conference.

## **10) Statement by the Spokesperson of the Private Sector**

Statement by the representative of the Private Sector summarizing results of their consultations organized prior to the Regional Conference.

## **11) Video: Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF)**

## **12) COVID-19 and Its Impact on Agri-food Systems, Food Security and Nutrition: Implications and Priorities for the Africa Region**

While COVID-19 is a global health crisis, it also threatens to eliminate the gains the world has made in eradicating hunger and malnutrition. This is especially true in the Africa region, where countries face multiple shocks and disruptions to economies and markets, natural resources, and public health systems.

FAO has moved swiftly to conduct rapid assessments from farm-to-fork of the impacts of COVID-19, including on food supply chains, food security and nutrition in the region. Among the effects that FAO analysed were effects of lockdowns on livelihoods and employment, food security, and domestic and international trade. FAO also assessed and continues to assess availability and access to food. To assist governments, FAO is providing policy advice and technical assistance on areas such as increasing local food production, implementing COVID-19-related policy measures across the food system, safeguarding animal health, improving food safety and hygiene, protecting food workers and promoting sustainable livelihoods in agriculture for vulnerable populations through its Technical Cooperation Programme, and by reorienting and accelerating existing donor-funded projects.

The recovery from COVID-19 will likely be slow and uncertain. Stimulus programmes should meet the needs of poor and vulnerable populations because the health status of poor and vulnerable people is directly linked to their access to safe and nutritious foods. Social protection programmes will be critical to meet the needs of the most affected and at risk vulnerable populations as well as to promote inclusive recovery and resilience interventions.

FAO will continue to mobilize resources for developmental and humanitarian projects and build on its call for funding through the recently announced COVID-19 Umbrella Programme to assist countries to recover and “build to transform” by accelerating investments to make food systems greener and more resilient.

## **13) Ministerial Discussion: FAO’s Hand-in-Hand Initiative: A New Approach to Combat Poverty and Hunger**

The Hand-in-Hand Initiative is an evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative aimed to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2). It contributes to the attainment of all the other SDGs. The initiative adopts a robust match-making approach that proactively brings together target countries with donors, the private sector, international financial institutions, academia and civil society to mobilize means of implementation that support accelerated actions. It prioritizes countries and territories within countries where poverty and hunger are most concentrated or where national capacities are most limited. It also introduces a framework for monitoring and impact analysis.

The initiative deploys sophisticated tools, including advanced geospatial modelling and analytics, to identify the biggest opportunities to raise the incomes and reduce the inequities and vulnerabilities of the rural poor, who constitute the vast majority of the world’s poor. It uses these tools to present an

evidence-based view of economic opportunities and to improve targeting and tailoring of policy interventions, innovation, finance and investment, and institutional reform. Hand-in-Hand adopts a market-oriented food systems approach to increasing the quantity, quality, diversity and accessibility of nutritious foods available in local, regional and national food markets. The initiative prioritizes countries where national capacities and international support are most limited or where operational challenges, including natural or human-induced crises, are greatest. This is in keeping with the UN's commitment to "leave no one behind."

#### **14) High-level Session: Actualizing Inclusive Food Systems Transformation in Africa through Leveraging Innovation and Digitalization: Toward UN Food Systems Summit 2021**

It is widely acknowledged that most contemporary food systems are not fulfilling these larger aspirations, and that some form of deep, transformative change is required to redirect the arc of food systems evolution toward sustainable development.

To play their critical role, food systems will need to do more than we have ever expected of them. They will need to deliver reliable food security and nutrition for all and be economically profitable, but they will also need to have a positive or neutral impact on the climate, biodiversity and the natural resource environment. They will need to meet rapidly growing food demand in an increasingly urbanized world, and they will need to evolve in ways that ensure that those least advantaged – the rural poor – are not left behind. Moreover, they will need to do much better than they are doing today to promote and enable healthy diets in order to curtail a global burgeoning of overweight and obesity that has already become the number one contributor to the global burden of disease.

The decision of the UN Secretary-General to convene a Food Systems Summit in late 2021 in the context of the UN Decade of Action to accelerate progress on the SDGs is a recognition of the importance of food systems transformation as a potential driver for the 2030 Agenda. It also recognizes the emergence of food systems transformation as a matter of interest to large constituencies across the world, including consumers, civil society, the private sector, investors and many others. The UN Rome-based agencies have been requested to provide the main UN support for the Summit preparations, and FAO has been invited to develop the technical platform and the science-policy interface for the Summit preparatory process.

This session will also discuss the opportunities that innovation and digitalization can provide for agrifood system transformation and achievement of SDGs. Integrating digital solutions in food and agriculture systems considers opportunities to be offered by ICT to reduce information asymmetries and link smallholder farmers to smart agricultural solutions. It also considers mechanisms and options for Members to strengthen their capacities to adopt innovative solutions and approaches with emphasis on delivery through strategic partnerships and multistakeholder platforms.

#### **15) The Role of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on Food Systems and Nutrition: How Can We Promote Cross-Sector Policy Convergence?**

CFS is entering the last phases of a multistakeholder policy convergence process to agree on the Guidelines, which are intended to be a reference point that provides guidance mainly to governments, as well as to their partners and other stakeholders, on effective policies, investments and institutional arrangements, that will address malnutrition in all its forms. The policy convergence process is supported by the scientific evidence provided by the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) Report on Nutrition and Food, which was launched in 2017 and aims to bring coherence to the existing policy fragmentation with a special emphasis on the food, agriculture and health sectors, while also addressing livelihood and sustainability challenges.



**16) Launch of the Report on Africa Regional Outlook on Gender and Agrifood Systems**

FAO and the AU joined hands to recently publish a seminal report titled: *Africa Regional Outlook on Gender and Agrifood Systems*. The first of its kind, and based on a review of 40 country gender assessments of agriculture and rural livelihoods, the report aims to enrich the knowledge and information base on gender and agrifood systems, food security and nutrition, and natural resources management to promote gender-responsive policies and actions and monitor progress towards AU gender benchmarks. It analyses the AU's existing commitments to gender and agrifood sectors, reviews regional and national agricultural policy documents and their monitoring and evaluation reports including in-depth gender audits of 38 NAIPs, and proposes recommendations towards promoting gender equality and women's empowerment to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the AU's Agenda 2063. The Director-General of FAO and the AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture will officially launch the report.

**17) Adoption of the Report of the Regional Conference**

The draft Report of the Regional Conference, prepared, discussed and adopted by the Senior Officers Meeting, will be reviewed and endorsed. In addition, a Ministerial Declaration will be submitted for consideration and adoption.