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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

## Thirty-second Session

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, 11-14 April 2022

### Priorities for FAO in the Region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31

#### Executive Summary

The strategic narrative guiding the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 is supporting the Agenda 2030 through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production*, *better nutrition*, a *better environment*, and a *better life*, leaving no one behind. FAO will implement the Strategic Framework through 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), which articulate FAO's thematic, technical comparative advantage and competency to deliver. Action at country level is at the core of the transformative nature of the Agenda 2030, and the PPAs act as a pathway towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in alignment with national priorities.

Four cross-cutting accelerators: technology, innovation, data and complements focus efforts in all of FAO's programmatic interventions and the crosscutting themes of gender, youth and inclusion are embedded across all of FAO's work to operationalize the principle of leaving no one behind. Two new Strategies on Science and Innovation and Climate Change are being developed to support the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2022-31. In the 2022-23 biennium, FAO will continue to maximize impact at the country level through other key corporate initiatives, including the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development in support of the SDGs. In addition, the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme aims to mitigate the immediate impacts while strengthening the longer-term resilience of livelihoods.

The Priorities for FAO in the Africa Region in 2022-23 and beyond are shaped by key trends and developments driving agrifood systems that present challenges and provide opportunities for *better production*, *better nutrition*, a *better environment*, and a *better life*, leaving no one behind. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, measures put in place to control or mitigate its impact, and the economic recession induced by the crisis continue to have a severe impact on the food security situation in Africa. The pandemic has become a significant threat to ending extreme poverty and eradicating hunger in Africa and risks wiping out the modest gains made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2014 Malabo Declaration and African Union (AU) Agenda 2063.

Documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

The FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 provides the framework for the regional programmatic agenda, including alignment of the results framework with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthening synergies and partnerships through corporate initiatives. Concurrent with the formulation of the FAO Strategic Framework is the reorganisation of regional structures in Africa, which aims to deliver FAO's programmes efficiently with concrete and tangible results and greater impact at the country level. At the core of the new regional structure are four Regional Priorities providing a coordination mechanism to ensure that key areas of importance are addressed through a programmatic approach. The Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) provide a framework for planning, implementation and reporting of specific areas of work that contribute to the delivery of FAO work plans in the Africa Region in 2022-23 and beyond. The four Regional Priorities are mapped to the 20 PPAs and corresponding SDG targets as well as to the *four betters*, aligning them to the FAO Strategic Framework.

With the alignment of Regional Priorities to Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), through the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2022-25 and Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2022-23, FAO in Africa is well positioned to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of technical support to country offices and enhance the coordination with governments, development partners and regional and national stakeholders.

#### **Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference**

- Take note of the efforts to localize the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, including the strategic narrative, which will guide all of FAO's work and approve the budgetary appropriations for the 2022-23 biennium in supporting the Agenda 2030.
- Recognize the re-organisation of regional structures in Africa, the programmatic approach and the reinvigorated business model to deliver FAO's programmes efficiently with concrete and tangible results and greater impact at the country level.
- Note the four Regional Priorities and their role for priority setting, programme operations and reporting on results.
- Take note of the development of the FAO Strategies on Science and Innovation and Climate Change, as well as other FAO corporate initiatives and their implementation at regional and country levels. Recognize the critical contribution of these corporate strategies and initiatives to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development for the eradication of poverty (SDG 1), hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10). In doing so, these efforts will contribute to the attainment of all the other SDGs in the region.
- Provide guidance on priorities for FAO's work in the Africa Region in 2022-23 based on major trends and developments as well as emerging challenges and opportunities in the Africa region within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, other corporate strategies and initiatives and UN Development System repositioning.

*Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:*

ARC Secretariat

ARC-Secretariat@fao.org

## I. Introduction

1. The 42nd Session of the FAO Conference endorsed the FAO [Strategic Framework 2022-31](#), which guides all of FAO's work as called for in the Basic Texts and approved the budgetary appropriations for the 2022-23 biennium.<sup>1</sup> The strategic narrative guiding the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 is supporting the Agenda 2030 through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind.
2. FAO will implement the Strategic Framework through 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), which articulate FAO's thematic, technical comparative advantage and competency to deliver. The *four betters* and 20 PPAs are anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Organization will use a systems approach, considering social, economic and environmental development dimensions, addressing the relevant trade-offs. Action at country level is at the core of the transformative nature of Agenda 2030, and the PPAs act as a pathway towards achieving the SDGs in alignment with national priorities.
3. The *four cross-cutting accelerators*: technology, innovation, data, and complements (governance, human capital and institutions) focus efforts in all of FAO's programmatic interventions to fast-track progress and maximize prospects for contributing to the SDGs, while minimizing trade-offs. The crosscutting themes of gender, youth and inclusion are embedded across all of FAO's work to operationalize the principle of leaving no one behind.
4. Two new Strategies on *Science and Innovation* and *Climate Change* are being developed to support the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, and provide guidance respectively on: (i) coherence and alignment to Member-led initiatives for impact at country level through better use of *science and innovation*; and (ii) strengthened support to countries in their raised ambitions on *climate action* and achievement of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
5. In the 2022-23 biennium, FAO will continue to maximize impact at the country level through other key corporate initiatives. The Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative is FAO's evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development in support of the SDGs. The *COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme* aims to mitigate the immediate impacts while strengthening the longer-term resilience of livelihoods, moving towards a green recovery, building to transform the agrifood systems, and appeals for immediate-, medium- and longer-term actions to prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis.

## II. Context

### Overview of trends and developments in Africa

- 6 The Priorities for FAO in the Africa Region in 2022-23 and beyond are shaped by key trends and developments driving the agrifood systems. The region continues to face formidable overlapping challenges, including the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet there are several promising opportunities for transforming agrifood systems and boosting inclusive and resilient economic growth in the region.
- 7 Overall, the Africa region is making gradual progress towards achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda. Several countries are not on track to meet the SDG targets to end hunger and ensure access by all people to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round, and to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030 (SDG 1 and SDG 2). In 2021, 490 million people in Africa, representing 36 percent of the total population, were living in extreme poverty, up from 481 million in 2019. The food security and nutrition situation in Africa is also deteriorating and hunger has worsened significantly since 2014. In 2021, there were more than 281 million hungry people, representing

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<sup>1</sup> C 2021/REP paragraphs 61-70 and CR 8/2021

21 percent of the population in Africa, an increase of 89.1 million people since 2014. In addition, in 2020 an estimated 346.6 million people experienced severe food insecurity and 452.2 million people moderate food insecurity.<sup>2</sup>

- 8 Intense pressure on natural resources, climate change and variability are undermining agricultural productivity with negative impacts on poverty, food security and nutrition. More than 40 percent of soils in Africa are degraded and have undergone severe nutrient depletion over the years that have left them less fertile. In 2018, water use efficiency in Africa was slightly more than 10 USD/m<sup>3</sup>, although changes in water use efficiency improved in most countries in the region over 2015-2018. Forest area in Africa represents 21.3 percent of total land area but the region recorded the largest annual rate of net forest loss in the world, at 3.9 million ha per year, during 2010–2020.<sup>3</sup> Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate variability and change, despite having the lowest contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) of 0.8 metric ton per capita, accounting.<sup>4</sup>
- 9 The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, measures put in place to control or mitigate its impact, and the economic recession induced by the crisis continue to have a severe impact on the food security situation in Africa. The pandemic has become a significant threat to ending extreme poverty and eradicating hunger in Africa and risks wiping out the modest gains made towards achieving the SDGs, the 2014 Malabo Declaration and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. The total cost of the disease, considering the effects on public health and supply chain disruptions, is still unclear. Various control measures to stop the spread have threatened people's access to food, disrupted economic and livelihood activities in service and other sectors/activities such as tourism, transport, commodity exports and imports, markets and commodity value chains. Between October 2019 and July 2021, the pandemic is estimated to have reduced the 2020 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) by 5.5 percentage points.<sup>5</sup> Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been affected disproportionately by the COVID-19 pandemic due to their tourism-dependent economies.
- 10 The COVID-19 pandemic is driving the deepest contraction on record for SSA.<sup>6</sup> Economic growth in SSA, is expected to rebound from -1.7 percent in 2020 to 3.7 percent in 2021, and 3.8 percent in 2022. Notwithstanding the projected positive growth forecast in SSA, economic recovery in the region remains uncertain and fragile, due mainly to the slow pace of vaccination and relatively limited fiscal support and investments compared to advanced economies and emerging markets. Several countries in Africa have not met the vaccination goals of 10 percent coverage by September 2021 and are likely to miss the 40 percent target by end-2021.<sup>7</sup> At current levels of vaccination and fiscal support, many African countries will face protracted economic challenges that jeopardize a return to pre-COVID-19 levels of activity, economic growth, and social stability.
- 11 Notwithstanding the challenges, there are several promising opportunities arising from the emerging global and regional trends that shape agrifood systems in Africa. Growing food markets, developments in science, technology and innovation, including accelerated digitalization and a growing youth population are creating new opportunities for agrifood systems transformation in SSA. Food markets in the region continue to grow and the value of annual agricultural output is projected to reach USD1 trillion by 2030. It is estimated that agricultural productivity could be 2-3 times higher with well-functioning agrifood systems. The African Continental Free Trade Area, (AfCFTA), with a combined GDP of USD 2.5 trillion provides significant opportunities to boost inter- and intra-regional agricultural and manufacturing trade, and spur development in many sectors. The AfCFTA came to force in January 2021 and several interventions to establish and/or strengthen competitive business environments that will boost productivity and investment are being implemented. The successful implementation of the Agreement is estimated to expand intra-

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<sup>2</sup> FAO, ECA and AUC. 2021. Africa – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and trends. Accra, FAO.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/ca9825en/ca9825en.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>

<sup>5</sup> IMF World economic outlook, 2021

<sup>6</sup> World Bank

<sup>7</sup> World Bank 2021, Africa's Pulse: An Analysis of Issues Shaping Africa's Economic Future, Volume 24

regional trade in agricultural products and services by 20-30 percent by 2040. Rapid urbanization in Africa is transforming diets in fundamental ways, including growing demands for high value foods such as meats, dairy, fresh produce (especially fruit and new vegetables) and more food is processed and prepared. Today three quarters of the population in Africa is below the age of 35. With the right social and economic investments and policies this burgeoning youthful population can yield significant demographic dividends that create multiple growth opportunities that fuel economic transformation on the continent.

- 12 In Africa, the Regional United Nations Development System (UNDS) transitioned in 2020 toward operationalizing the Regional Collaborative Platform and formalized several processes against the challenging background of the COVID-19 pandemic. To get the region back on track in implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, and the African Union's Agenda 2063, with renewed urgency in the Decade of Action, the UNDS provided coordinated and proactive support, playing a critical role in strengthening the capacity of African countries to respond to the pandemic, and charting pathways for continued recovery. It engaged in concrete joined-up action, which contributed to the attainment of some of Africa's key sustainable development priorities such as the historic AfCTFA, making the Agreement work for Women and Youth, the regional pharmaceutical pooled procurement, the Knowledge Management Hub, as well as Debt Management and Restructuring, among other things.

### A. Challenges and Opportunities for *better production*

- 13 Agricultural production and productivity growth are critical in meeting the food security and nutrition needs of the population, improve the livelihood conditions of those who depend on agriculture for jobs and incomes, and contribute to the economic transformation process. Agricultural production in SSA has grown at roughly 4.3 percent annually since 2000, contributing to the robust economic transformation in many countries in the region. However, this agricultural growth has come mainly through expansion of cultivated area rather than from increased productivity.
- 14 Small-scale food producers in Africa systematically record lower average labour productivity than larger food producers. They also have the lowest average incomes among small-scale food producers across the developing world. Within Africa, the incomes of small-scale food producers are, on average, less than half of those of larger food producers. Income differences are also reflected between men and women, with incomes of women systematically lower than those of their male counterpart small-scale food producers.
- 15 Much of the sluggish growth in agricultural productivity is due to under-investment in public investments in agriculture, particularly on agricultural research and development. Public expenditure in agriculture for SSA, measured by the Agriculture Orientation Index (AOI), declined from 0.17 to 0.13 between 2001 and 2019.<sup>8-9,10</sup>
- 16 Persistent inefficiencies in agrifood systems in Africa are also reflected in leakages in agrifood supply chains. Food loss in the region is among the highest globally with about 15 percent of Africa's food lost in the food supply chain between production and retail levels. Levels of food loss are generally higher for perishable commodities, such as fruits and vegetables, compared to cereals and legumes. Estimated food losses of up to 50 percent have been reported for fruits and up to 20 percent for cereals and pulses. Such estimates of food loss when combined with low agricultural productivity compounds food supply problems.

<sup>8</sup> The agriculture orientation index (AOI) for government expenditure compares government expenditure for agriculture, fishing and forestry and the sector's contribution to GDP

<sup>9</sup> FAO. 2021. Tracking progress on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators 2021: A report on the indicators under FAO custodianship. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6872en>

<sup>10</sup> Ulimwengu, J. M., Constan, M. A., and Ubalijoro, E. (Eds.) 2021. Building Resilient African Food Systems After COVID-19. ReSAKSS 2021 Annual Trends and Outlook Report. Kigali and Washington, DC: AKADEMIYA2063 and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

- 17 Logistics bottlenecks in Africa's agrifood supply chains drive up the costs of goods, puts pressure on food prices and make inputs and services more expensive. Many African countries rank very low on indicators such as cross-border clearance processes, quality of trade, infrastructure, inconsistent tax regimes, and consignments' track and trace mechanisms in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index.
- 18 Advances in science, technology and innovation are critical to harness sustainable production patterns, through more efficient solutions for improving agricultural productivity and management of natural resources. Access to science-based knowledge, innovation and technologies facilitate farmers and other actors' use of improved inputs and management practices, such as improved seeds and animal breeds, better soil management, crop protection and irrigation practices, watershed management, that deliver significant increase in agricultural productivity and efficient functioning of activities across agricultural agrifood systems. The response to shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has also unleashed new technologies and innovations that are reshaping farmers' and agrifood enterprises access to markets and services as well as extending value chains into previously hard-to-reach areas.
- 19 Reducing food loss and waste is an important way to reduce production costs, increase efficiencies upstream and downstream activities in agrifood systems as well as improve food security and enhance environmental sustainability. Investments in improved farm and off-farm storage facilities, including cold storage facilities, good transportation, marketing infrastructure and efficient trade logistics are critical to reduce quantitative and qualitative food losses. Innovations, such as warehouse receipt systems, and improvements in digital technologies that link farmers to services, such as storage, marketing, advisory and financial services have been pilot tested with good results in many African countries. Public and private investments to scale up these promising post-harvest technologies and innovations offer promising opportunities to generate new knowledge and provide efficient solutions that can significantly reduce food loss in Africa
- 20 Technical assistance and investments that help develop effective and efficient logistics systems are critical in reducing costs in supply and marketing along agrifood chains in Africa. The successful implementation of the AfCFTA is expected to provide a significant boost to logistics because of its critical role in raising the current levels of intra-regional trade and increasing trade diversification that allow large as well as small and medium enterprises to participate in regional and international trade. The emerging use of digital technology by e-logistics companies in Africa is providing new opportunities for reducing transport costs and delays as well as improving the quality of services along transport corridors.<sup>11</sup>
- 21 New digital technologies and solutions, such as drones, e-commerce platforms and sensors are driving agrifood transformation processes at a faster rate than has been experienced before. These technologies bolster the performance of advisory services, sustainable production, market linkages and value chain development. Recent evidence shows that when bundled digital agriculture services are effectively offered, average productivity can improve up to 168 percent, while smallholder income may increase up to 57 percent.<sup>12</sup> The development of digital finance is increasing farmers' opportunities to better manage and have access to finance, through platforms such as MOBIS in Uganda or Farmdrive in Kenya. Digital platforms are being used to facilitate access to the agricultural insurance, through innovative schemes such as weather index-based insurance as well as to better manage agriculture data and information systems for development programme planning. Accelerated digitalization in Africa is providing new opportunities employment and entrepreneurship in agriculture, which are increasingly benefiting young people and women.

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<sup>11</sup> International Finance Corporation, 2020, Creating Markets: Navigating Africa's New Logistics Landscape

<sup>12</sup> CTA and Dalberg, The Digitalisation of African Agriculture Report, 2018-2019  
<https://www.cta.int/en/digitalisation-agriculture-africa>

## **B. Challenges and Opportunities for *better nutrition***

- 22 In 2020 about 1 billion people in Africa could not afford a healthy diet.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, 15 African countries were identified as “high-risk” of severe deterioration of food security and nutrition.<sup>14</sup> In part, the declining food security and nutrition situation on the continent is due to poverty and inequality as well as underlying structural causes that amplify the main drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition such as conflict, climate variability and extremes, economic slowdowns and downturns and the unaffordability of a healthy diet.
- 23 Nearly all countries in Africa are experiencing the burden of malnutrition, mainly in the form of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Overweight and obesity are also emerging as significant health concerns in several countries. Disruption to food supply systems and pressure on food prices due to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic are aggravating the food security and nutrition situation, derailing the gains made in fighting hunger and malnutrition in the continent.
- 24 FAO’s work in Africa in nutrition is anchored in the corporate strategy on nutrition, including the five action areas – using data for impact; using evidence on healthy diets; catalysing policy and action; building capacity and strengthening commitment – and the fifteen actions across agrifood systems to enable healthy diets for all.
- 25 Global, regional and country efforts for reinforcing coordination, networking and focusing on nutrition interventions that work is critical in reversing the nutrition challenges in Africa. The Africa region is home to a wide variety of indigenous foods including pulses, cereals, fruits, vegetables, and animal species, which contribute to healthy and productive lives. Advocacy for healthy diets and building evidence on the health benefits of eating well offers opportunities to influence consumer demand for healthy foods and provide greater incentives for increased sustainable production. Influencing policies and strategies for healthy eating habits is a strong entry point to garner political action in the fight against malnutrition. Such actions include building capacity of parliamentarians on the right to food agenda, supporting use of evidence-based messaging and IT platforms to disseminate information advocating for healthy diets. Scaling up promising technologies and practices, such as fortification and biofortification approaches, provide important pathways opportunity to increase availability of affordable healthy foods. In addition, FAO in Africa is strengthening engagements with the private sector and investors to catalyse policy and actions for healthy diets.

## **C. Challenges and opportunities for *a better environment***

- 26 Deforestation and forest degradation, continued biodiversity loss, and the ongoing degradation of ecosystems, are having profound consequences on agricultural production and productivity as well as on livelihoods and the well-being of rural and urban populations. Equitable access to water and land will not be possible with the increasing scarcity of land and water, lack of sustainable management and governance mechanisms and impacts of climate change. Lack of appropriate land use and water resource planning causes degradation of various land resources, including soil nutrient depletion, desertification, and large-scale deforestation. Without proper land use planning, land use categories are not clearly demarcated, resulting in inappropriate switching of land from one category into another, such as when rising urbanization leads to conversion of fertile agricultural land for buildings or when land expansion for agriculture or pastoral activities encroaches into forest areas. Water is an essential resource for improving agricultural production and productivity as well as in reducing poverty and food insecurity and improving functioning of ecosystems. Interventions that improve agricultural water productivity are therefore critical for

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<sup>13</sup> FAO, ECA and AUC. 2021. Africa – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and trends. Accra, FAO.

<sup>14</sup> FAO-AUC, 2021, Joint virtual meeting of the African ministers responsible for agriculture, trade and finance



improving water use efficiency, particularly in SSA where more than 80 percent of cropland is low-input rainfed production and only 3 percent of land is irrigated.

- 27 Overall GHG net emissions in Africa are expected to increase by 10 percent by 2030 across all sectors compared to 2015 levels despite NDCs implementation. The lack of adequate climate finance, which can enable development and dissemination of climate resilient crop varieties, climate information services and renewable energy and other climate change adaptation and mitigation measures— is a major barrier in scaling climate action. Knowledge gaps on climate change impacts in the agriculture, forestry, and land use sectors and limited technical capacities for project development also limit opportunities to scale climate finance. On the adaptation front, gaps exist in the adaptation policy coverage of responses to climate risks reported in all agricultural sub-sectors.
- 28 Climate change and climate variability intensifies the frequency and impacts of shocks that disproportionately affect the poorest households. Poor households typically respond to repeated climate shocks by undertaking unsustainable coping strategies which perpetuate the cycle of poverty and vulnerability, with long-term negative impacts on food security, nutrition and human capital.
- 29 FAO has developed several normative products and tools that can be used to improve governance systems, management approaches, infrastructure, and financing mechanisms for sustainable natural resource management and improved access to natural resources and ecosystem services. In the area of land and water management, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) promotes responsible governance of tenure to land, forestry and fisheries. The Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management, (VGSSM), promote sustainable soil management. AQUASTAT, a database and software package, is used to monitor and manage water worldwide, while WaPOR provides a portal to monitor water productivity through Open-access of remotely sensed data. Initiatives such as the Global Soil Partnership and African Soil Partnership provide opportunities to improve land management in SSA in sustainable water management initiatives such as WATER4NUTRITION aims to increase water productivity for nutrition sensitive agriculture. There are also good opportunities for scaling up solar powered irrigation systems and agroecology approaches for sustainable land, soil and water management, soil health and soil fertility management.
- 30 Interventions aimed at reducing the vulnerability and increasing the resilience of forests, agrosilvopastoral systems and forest dependent communities using landscape and sustainable equitable and gender-sensitive forest and agriculture products' value chain approaches, are particularly relevant in Africa. These include the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes building on ongoing initiatives, such as Africa's Great Green Wall and the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative.
- 31 Viable solutions already exist and scaling and implementing them promptly will help stave off the worst impacts of climate change in the region. These solutions include initiatives for Ecosystem Restoration, Climate Smart Agriculture, reducing emissions from livestock, agricultural soils, forest loss and degradation, and biomass burning that will be critical to lowering the GHG footprint of the region and in the agriculture sector. Key adaptation priorities include plant and animal genetic resource conservation and diversification, soil restoration practices, sustainable forest management, forest and landscape restoration and ecosystem restoration, improved irrigation technologies and climate smart agriculture.
- 32 COP26 provided new opportunities for FAO and partners to address climate change in Africa, including the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture;<sup>15</sup> Global Goal on Adaptation, Sharm el Sheikh work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation;<sup>16</sup> the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use that aims to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030;<sup>17</sup> In

<sup>15</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sb2021\\_L01\\_adv.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sb2021_L01_adv.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma3\\_auv\\_4ac\\_Global\\_Goal.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma3_auv_4ac_Global_Goal.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> <https://unfao.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/climatechange/Ef7AC74-3kdJt3b4SBH8jRYBy7IPzLaKxTdWq5Bh-GsISA?e=W1wnDw>



addition, the African Union continent-wide Green Recovery Action Plan (GRAP) aims to strengthen collaboration for Africa's sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and support the realization of a shared vision for a prosperous, secure, inclusive, and innovative future.

#### **D. Challenges and opportunities for a better life**

- 33 Inequality, in its many forms remains a significant challenge in Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated systemic inequality in the region because it disproportionately affected the poorest and most vulnerable people. COVID-19 has also amplified gender inequalities, manifested in unequal access to productive resources, income opportunities and fiscal support, such as stimulus support initiatives.<sup>18</sup> The onset of the pandemic also saw increased violence against women and girls as well as increased home care work that tends to fall disproportionately on women. In addition, youth and women who dominate the informal sector have been disproportionately affected by lockdowns and other response measures that resulted in loss of jobs and other income opportunities. The use of child labour, particularly in the agriculture sector which accounts for over 80 percent of children in child labour, present additional challenges for inequality and decent work. Multiple shocks and stresses, including conflicts, climate variability and extremes, food chain crisis, economic slowdowns and downturns have increased the number of hungry people in Africa.<sup>19</sup> At the same time the outbreak of COVID 19 and the measures put in place to control the pandemic as well as other threats to food chains such as locust invasions in Eastern and Southern Africa, drought and crop pests in Southern Madagascar, aggravated the fragility of food security and nutrition situation, with negative impacts on the lives and livelihoods of millions of Africans and their communities.
- 34 Rising food prices, observed in many African countries following the onset of COVID-19, is contributing to growing inequalities. In 2020 alone, 39 percent of countries in Africa were affected by high or moderately high food prices compared to 9 percent in 2019.<sup>20</sup> The dual shock of rising food prices and falling incomes is exacerbating current levels of inequality in Africa, where poor households with consumption below USD 2.97 a day spend about 58 percent of their income on food.
- 35 Inclusion is critical for FAO's interventions to *leaving no one behind*, which calls for an inclusive approach to local, national and global action to ensure historically marginalized groups participate, contribute and benefit from economic growth and human development. It is a process, a principle and an outcome.
- 36 Social protection coverage, in particular social assistance has increased over time, driven in part by initiatives such as the Grand Bargain of 2016, well established platforms and coalitions improving coordination between development partners, and overall improved capacities for delivery at the national level enabled by digitization, Management Information System (MIS), and robust training programmes, including the TRANSFORM platform.<sup>21</sup>
- 37 In Africa, FAO is supporting Governments to strengthen their capacities of designing and implementing inclusive social protection policies and programmes linked with food systems and climate change towards the achievement of resilient food security and nutrition outcomes, and sustainable livelihoods adaptive to shocks. Furthermore, FAO is strengthening its efforts to generate knowledge and expand the evidence base to develop practical approaches that inform governments' policies and programmes. FAO is also strengthening partnerships with the African Union, regional institutions, UN agencies and development partners to mobilize resources and

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<sup>18</sup> Etale, L.; Puskur, R. (*forthcoming*). Stock take of gender-responsive measures in the agriculture sector to counteract the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic in Ethiopia, Senegal and Zambia. Accra and Nairobi: Food and Agriculture Organization and CGIAR GENDER Platform.

<sup>19</sup> FAO, ECA and AUC. 2021. Africa – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and trends. Accra, FAO.

<sup>20</sup> FAO. 2021. *Tracking progress on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators 2021: A report on the indicators under FAO custodianship*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6872en>

<sup>21</sup> TRANSFORM is an inter-agency initiative of United Nations agencies supporting the building of social protection floors in Africa.

promote policy dialogues in favour of sustainable social protection systems for poverty reduction and more inclusive and sustainable pathway to structural transformation in Africa, particularly in rural areas.

- 38 The World Food Forum (WFF) activities, created for and led by youth, is one example of global action towards transforming agrifood systems and achieving the SDGs. The WFF brings together youth from around the world to brainstorm and spur action, recognizing that the present and future of our planet belongs to them and that their engagement is central. In Africa, FAO is engaging youth and putting them at the centre of assessing their needs and interventions to capitalize on the opportunities. FAO is partnering with Governments and key stakeholders to design and implement programmes, such as the Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA), developed in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and in close collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC). This programme proposes an integrated approach for the creation of quality on- and off- farm employment and self-employment opportunities for African youth in agriculture and agribusiness. It highlights the central role of agriculture for Africa's development, while emphasizing the need for continuous empowerment of African youth to be the engine of this growth. The multi-level approach (continental, sub-regional, national) reflects the need for a concerted effort between public institutions and the private sector on capacity development, access to resources, improved coordination and linkages, and knowledge generation and dissemination. FAO also invests in the design of practical tools such as the "Investment Guidelines for Youth in Agrifood Systems in Africa", developed jointly by FAO and the AUC. These interventions engage Africa's youth as a development partner, adviser and innovator.
- 39 Gender equality is central to FAO's mandate as FAO can achieve its goals only if it works in parallel towards gender equality and supports women's diverse roles in agriculture and rural transformation. FAO aims to: (i) reduce the gap between rural women and men in access to productive resources and services; (ii) ensure that women and men have the ability to influence programme and policy decision-making and building institutional responsiveness and accountability (voice); and (iii) ensure that rural women and men can take up economic opportunities to improve their individual and household wellbeing (agency). FAO's work in the Africa region encompasses gender mainstreaming, which ensures the integration of gender in all the planning, programming and implementation activities in work programming, and women's empowerment initiatives, focusing on the analysis of gender issues within priority areas of work and the identification of opportunities for advancing rural women's economic activities at regional and country level. A South-South Cooperation workshop organized with the International Trade Centre and the Africa Network of Women in Agribusiness provided opportunities to foster exchange of lessons and practices to promote a gender-responsive implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area in agricultural trade.
- 40 FAO's work in resilience focuses on smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fishers, foresters and their communities. This work involves cross sectoral and innovative solutions as well as anticipatory and responsive interventions that tackle the root causes of fragility. FAO aims to dedicate at least 20 percent of overall emergency financing to anticipatory action by 2025. New technologies and innovations are available that can be harnessed to monitor risks to inform early warning and early action to act ahead of hazards. Partnerships and coalitions that bring together different actors along agrifood systems and sectors to design and implement holistic approaches at local, national and regional levels could meaningfully reduce the effects of disasters on food security and nutrition. More investments in risk informed and shock responsive social protection systems can help address the vulnerability of the large rural agricultural and pastoral livelihoods, especially in the context of the response to COVID-19. Opportunities also exist to work with communities at the local level to reduce and prevent resource-based conflicts through innovative conflict-sensitive approaches, including improved and equitable access to natural resources, community cohesion and resilience promoting livelihood support, reintegration, host and internally displaced people (IDPs) relations, cross-border programming and rural employment.

- 41 Intra-regional trade is one of the key drivers for economic growth and could be shaped to facilitate inclusive growth that contribute to poverty and inequality reduction in Africa. The Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) provides such an opportunity to help African countries deepen integration into global markets, reduce poverty and promote inclusion.
- 42 The AfCFTA agreement, presents new opportunities for increased intra-African trade, including trade in agricultural commodities and services.<sup>22</sup> If successfully implemented, the AfCFTA will integrate small fragmented national and regional markets into one single market of over one billion consumers with a combined gross domestic product of over USD 2.5 trillion by eliminating longstanding barriers to trade and regional integration.<sup>23</sup> It is estimated that tariff liberalisation in the transition phase could generate welfare gains of USD 16.1 billion, as well as drive growth in intra-African trade of 33 percent up from 15 percent.<sup>24</sup> Successful implementation of the AfCFTA could lift an estimated additional 30 million people from extreme poverty and 68 million people from moderate poverty.<sup>25</sup>
- 43 FAO worked with AUC to develop a Framework for Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services.<sup>26</sup> The Framework provides a practical policy guidance tool for countries and regional economic communities to enhance agricultural trade policies and strategies to ensure increased agricultural trade under the AfCFTA. Women can benefit significantly from new jobs and income opportunities created by the Agreement, particularly in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. To ensure that this happens, FAO is also working with the International Trade Centre and other partners to promote a gender-responsive implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, particularly in agricultural trade and services.

### **III. Priority areas of work in 2022-23**

#### **1. Regional Priorities**

- 44 The FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 provides the overarching framework for the regional programmatic agenda, including alignment of the results framework with the 2030 Agenda and strengthening synergies and partnerships through corporate initiatives such as the HiH Initiative.
- 45 Concurrent with the formulation of the FAO Strategic Framework is the reorganisation of FAO's regional structures in Africa, which aims to deliver FAO's programmes efficiently with concrete and tangible results and greater impact at the country level. At the core of the new regional structure are Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) that will be implemented by multi-disciplinary teams located across the region.
- 46 The process for developing Regional Priorities, aligning with the PPAs, and adjusting implementation mechanisms was a key component of the review of regional structures to complement FAO HQ reform. It also provided an opportunity to respond to a key recommendation from the 31st Session of the Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) to fine-tune the three Regional Initiatives to make them more relevant in the context of new initiatives, such as the HiH Initiative, COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, and the repositioning of the UN Development System.
- 47 The four Regional Priorities capture key themes emerging from country, sub-regional, and regional levels, reflecting the COVID-19 pandemic and priorities developed in consultation with Members and key stakeholders. The Regional Priorities are:

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<sup>22</sup> See 17th CAADP Partnership Platform meeting, 2021

<sup>23</sup> (UNCTAD, 2019)

<sup>24</sup> (UNCTAD, 2019)

<sup>25</sup> World Bank. The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects. Washington, DC: World Bank

<sup>26</sup> AUC and FAO. 2021. Framework for Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services

- (i) Sustainable Agrifood Production Systems;
  - (ii) Efficient and Equitable Food and Nutrition Systems;
  - (iii) Climate action and sustainable natural resource management; and
  - (iv) Building resilience and ending poverty.
- 48 The Regional Priorities form the basis of the regional programme, and together with associated PPAs provide a coordination mechanism to ensure that priorities of the Governing Bodies including the Regional Conference, and other regional commitments are addressed in a programmatic and coordinated manner.
- 49 Each of the four Regional Priorities are associated with the 20 PPAs and their respective SDG targets. The PPAs provide a framework for planning, implementation and reporting of specific areas of work that contribute to the delivery of FAO work plans in the Africa Region in 2022-23 and beyond. The FAO regional office has put in place a structure consisting of multi-disciplinary teams responsible for the effective and efficient delivery of the Africa region's programme of work. The multi-disciplinary teams are organized under 15 programme work areas as regional areas of emphasis for delivering on the PPAs and Regional Priorities.
- 50 As mentioned above, the four Regional Priorities are mapped to the 20 PPAs and corresponding SDG targets as well as to the *four betters* to align them to the FAO Strategic Framework. Using the SDG targets at country, regional and corporate levels facilitate working together as One FAO under the FAO Strategic Framework, through a regional programmatic approach across all layers of the Organization under a common vision and results architecture.

### Regional Priority 1: Sustainable Agrifood Production Systems

Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)	SDG Targets	Regional Areas of Emphasis
BP1: Innovation for sustainable agriculture production	2.3, 2.4, 6.4, 15.2	Animal production systems and One Health platforms and actions Crop production and protection systems
BP2: Blue transformation	2.1, 2.2, 14.2, 14.4, 14.6, 14.7, 14.b, 14.c.	Fisheries and aquaculture systems
BP3: One Health	1.5, 3.d, 15.8.	Animal production systems and One Health platforms and actions
BP4: Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources	1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 9.3	Crop production and protection systems
BP5: Digital agriculture	1.4, 5.b, 9.c, 17.8.	Crop production and protection systems

- 51 Regional Priority 1: Sustainable Agrifood Production Systems, is fully aligned with *better production*, encompassing more productive and sustainable crops, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture production systems. It further embraces solutions to facilitate small-scale producers' access to resources and address key innovations needed to transform Africa's agrifood production systems.

52 This priority will help FAO support member countries address challenges and opportunities to:

- Tackle poverty and food insecurity in Africa, particularly in rural areas where over 80 percent of the population have a consumption level below the US\$ 1.90-a-day poverty line and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Raising agricultural productivity, especially on small scale farms, increases farm incomes of poor households and helps meet rising urban demand for food and other agricultural products.
- Take full advantage of science, technology and innovation, including the rapid uptake of digitalization, to support small scale farmers, livestock keepers and fisherfolks engage much more in inclusive value chain development and get enhanced access to production techniques and markets that were previously unattainable.

53 This priority addresses these challenges and opportunities with interventions that promote and scale up modern and resilient agricultural practices to increase crop productivity and production, maintain integrity of ecosystems, enhance capacity of agrifood production systems to respond to natural disasters and improve quality of natural resources. Interventions will also strengthen One Health platforms, coordinate One Health interventions and implement an integrated control of zoonotic diseases, responsible use of AMR, plant and animal health and diseases and preventing the next pandemic in agrifood supply chains. In addition, interventions will promote and scale up modern and resilient practices that increase fisheries and aquaculture productivity and production, maintain integrity of ecosystems, and maximize the contribution of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to food and nutrition security and improved livelihoods.

## Regional Priority 2: Efficient and Equitable Food and Nutrition Systems

Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)	SDG Targets	Regional Areas of Emphasis
BN1: Healthy diets for all	1.3, 2.1, 2.2 3.1, 3.2, 3.4 12.8, 14.b	Make nutritious foods safe, available and accessible
BN2: Nutrition for the most vulnerable	1.3, 2.1, 2.2 3.1, 3.2.	Smart policies, institutions and investments for agrifood systems transformation
BN4: Reducing food loss and waste	2.1, 2.2, 12.3	Agribusiness, inclusive and resilient agrifood value chains
BN5: Transparent markets and trade	2.b, 2.c, 10.a, 17.11.	Trade and market opportunities for inclusive growth
BE4: Achieving sustainable urban food systems	1.1, 2.1, 11.a, 12.1	Make nutritious foods safe, available and accessible
BL2: Inclusive rural transformation	1.1, 8.3, 8.5,10.1, 10.2, 10.7, 14.b	Agribusiness, inclusive and resilient agrifood value chains
BL5: Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative	1.1, 1.2, 2.1 2.2, 2.a, 10.1, 10.2	Make nutritious foods safe, available and accessible

		Smart policies, institutions and investments for agrifood systems transformation
BL6: Scaling up investment	1.b, 2.a, 10.1, 10.2, 10.b, 17.5	Smart policies, institutions and investments for agrifood systems transformation

- 54 Regional Priority 2: Efficient and Equitable Food and Nutrition Systems, aligns strongly with key elements of *better nutrition* with a clear focus on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition as well as on trade, food safety, agribusiness and inclusive value chain development. In addition, the priority explores opportunities for employment and other income earning opportunities for the poor, women, youth and other vulnerable populations
- 55 This priority will help FAO support its member countries to better respond to the challenges and opportunities arising from:
- The more than a quarter of a billion hungry people living in SSA as well as the declining food security and nutrition situation on the continent and its underlying structural causes that amplify the main drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition.
  - Limited access to healthy diets that are out of reach for nearly a billion people in Africa
  - The need for promoting healthy diets and influencing consumer demand for healthy foods.
  - Trade and inclusive value chain development to deepen integration into regional and global markets and facilitate inclusive growth which contributes to reducing poverty and inequality.
- 56 This priority addresses these challenges and opportunities with interventions that improve post-farm production activities such as reducing food waste and loss, processing of food, and enhancing functioning of food systems. Interventions will also support strategies, policies and investments to increase quality, quantity and safety of healthy diets to ensure the safety and quality of food from production to consumption and fair trade of food products. Interventions will also contribute to improve the policy, regulatory, accountability and governance environment for sustained resource allocations as well as support strategic partnerships and promote policies for inclusive transformation of agrifood systems. In addition, there is a focus on promoting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services, better functioning of national and regional markets to drive increased agricultural productivity, value addition and income opportunities for small scale food producers, SMEs and other actors in agrifood systems. Finally, interventions will enable private investments along the value chains, foster inclusive economic growth and enhance the ability of agrifood systems actors and activities to respond to shocks.



### Regional Priority 3: Climate action and sustainable natural resource management

Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)	SDG Targets	Regional Areas of Emphasis
BP4: Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources	1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 9.3	Ecosystem Restoration and sustainable land management; Water Management for Sustainable Agriculture
BE1: Climate change mitigating and adapted agrifood systems	2.4, 13.1, 13.2, 13.b, 14.3	Scaling up Climate Smart Agriculture Ecosystem Restoration and sustainable land management Water Management and sustainable land management
BE2: Bioeconomy for sustainable food and agriculture	12.2, 12.4, 12.5	Ecosystem Restoration and sustainable land management Water Management for Sustainable Agriculture Sustainable use of biodiversity, Responsible Governance of Natural Resources
BE3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture	2.5, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.6	Sustainable use of biodiversity, Responsible Governance of Natural Resources

57 Regional Priority 3 aligns well with a *better environment* and key elements of better production to foster sustainable transformation in agrifood systems through promoting climate smart agriculture, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land, biodiversity, and water management.

58 This priority will help FAO support its member countries to address the challenges and opportunities due to:

- Climate variability and extremes that are key drivers behind recent rises in hunger and severe food crises that have affected health, lives, and livelihoods and the necessary transitions towards a trajectory compatible with a low-carbon, climate-resilient, and sustainable future.
- Rising deforestation, ongoing degradation of forests and ecosystems and continued biodiversity loss that are having negative impacts on agricultural production and productivity as well as on livelihoods and the well-being of rural and urban populations.

59 Interventions under this Regional Priority will aim to scale up adoption of climate smart agriculture (CSA) practices and technologies for sustainable, adapted, and resilient production systems across Africa's rural and urban landscapes; reverse deforestation, desertification, land and soil degradation and enhance ecosystem services across rural and urban areas. In addition, interventions aim to mainstream biodiversity in all agriculture sectors, promote access to natural and productive

resources, support sustainable development of value chains for forest, wildlife and fisheries products and promote good governance on use of natural resources as well as support development and implementation of Integrated Water Resources Utilization, small scale irrigation, scaling of Solar Powered Irrigation System and integrated Watershed management.

#### Regional Priority 4: Building resilience, ending poverty.

Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)	SDG Targets	Regional Areas of Emphasis
BL1: Gender equality and rural women's empowerment	2.3, 5.4, 5.a, 5.c	Gender and inclusion (cross cutting)
BL2: Inclusive rural transformation	1.1, 8.3, 8.5, 10.1, 10.2, 10.7, 14.b	Decent employment in agrifood systems
BL3: Agriculture and food emergencies	1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 16.1.	Social protection for livelihoods and resilience
BL4: Resilient agrifood systems	1.3, 1.5, 2.4.	Resilience of livelihoods to natural and man-made disasters African SIDS

60 Regional Priority 4 fully aligns with a *better life*, encompassing social protection for improving livelihoods and resilience of livelihoods and agrifood systems to natural and man-made shocks; decent employment in agrifood systems. This priority emphasizes the participation of youth and women in agrifood systems transformation as well as strengthening the resilience and sustainability of agrifood systems in SIDS.

61 This priority will help FAO support its member countries to address the challenges and opportunities arising from:

- Growing youth unemployment and lower participation of women in decent work in the labour force as well as the risks of marginalization of vulnerable populations such as youth, women, migrants in transformation of agrifood systems.
- Gaps in social protection, including social protection coverage and innovations in the design and implementation of inclusive social protection policies and programmes associated with transformation in agrifood systems.
- Shocks and other disasters that weaken the resilience of households and their communities to cope as well as countries and regions to meaningfully reduce the effects of disasters on food security and nutrition.

Interventions aim to promote gender equality and youth engagement as well as support the diverse roles of women and youth in inclusive agrifood systems and rural transformation; strengthen and expand national social protection systems that are shock-responsive, adaptive and flexible, supporting economic inclusion and sustainable livelihoods, notably for the most vulnerable and poor. In addition, interventions would strengthen resilience of household livelihoods, reducing vulnerability to natural disasters, economic crises, and conflicts, especially in fragile contexts as well as promote employment, workers' rights, formality of rural workers, elimination of child labour, access to social protection and inclusive policy dialogue around agrifood systems to optimize responsible investments and achieve higher levels of economic productivity. Finally, interventions would promote and scale up priorities identified in the Global Action Programme for Food Security and Nutrition in African SIDS.

## 2. Accelerators and cross-cutting themes

62 To accelerate progress and maximize efforts in meeting the SDGs and to realize the *four betters*, FAO will apply four cross-cutting accelerators in all programmatic interventions to accelerate impact while minimizing trade-offs:

a) Technology for sustainable agrifood systems can be defined as the application of science and knowledge to develop techniques to deliver a product and/or service that enhances the sustainability of agrifood systems. Access and use of technologies must be available and affordable to all, being mindful of risks of increasing inequality, market concentration and contributing to the degradation of natural resources. FAO Africa is harnessing the full range of digital and non-digital technologies in programmes, projects, and initiatives to support inclusive and sustainable transformation of agrifood systems. Large productivity gains are within reach in Africa through investments in improved irrigation systems, alongside the use of improved inputs, and the application of innovation, science, and technology. Working with its partners and key stakeholders FAO is promoting science-based knowledge, innovation, and technologies to harness a wise and sustainable use of these improved inputs in agriculture as well as within food value chains and all aspects of agricultural development. FAO also continues to facilitate important technologies and best practices, such as e-Agriculture Community of Practice, a knowledge-sharing and capacity development platform with 18,700 registered users from more than 190 Member countries, and the “Nuru” application, which can be used with a smartphone, relies on machine learning and artificial intelligence to help tackle Fall Armyworm in Africa.

b) Innovation is a central driving force for achieving a world free from hunger and malnutrition, and includes technological, social, policy, institutional and financial innovations. Innovation can be defined as doing something new and different like solving an old problem in a new way, addressing a new problem with a proven solution, and/or bringing a new solution to a new problem. FAO Africa organized a regional consultation on the *Science and Innovation Strategy*, ensuring that the Strategy responds to Africa’s challenges, needs and emerging opportunities. FAO Africa is also accelerating the use of digital innovation to improve operational efficiencies and effectiveness in delivery of its programme of work. FAO in Africa aims to further catalyse digital technologies and digital platforms for impact using data and real-time information to provide new opportunities to react more quickly in an environment of increasing risk and uncertainty. In addition, the pilot FAO Digital Village Initiative in Africa implemented in seven African countries aims to facilitate digital farmer services, e-agriculture services, and digital services for rural transformation. Working with countries and partners the findings and lessons from this pilot are being scaled up in other African countries.

c) Data products contribute to strengthening evidence-based decision-making, and include the development of methods, standards, and frameworks, and the collection, processing, and dissemination of data, together with required capacity building and partnerships. Statistics and provision of data products continue to be at the core of FAO support to its member countries and regional partners. FAO Africa supports continental and regional organizations such as the African Union, AUDA-NEPAD and member countries with database and technical assistance to track key indicators and comply with the accountability mechanisms for the CAADP/Malabo declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, FAO is working in partnership with other UN Agencies and the World Bank to support the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agriculture and Rural Statistics in Africa. This initiative aims to build stronger capacities in national agricultural statistical systems for accountability reporting and policy making.

d) Complements (governance, human capital and institutions) are necessary and complementary dimensions of effective collective action at all scales, considering that while technology and innovation have achieved important progress over the last decade, many stakeholders remain excluded from their benefits. FAO Africa prioritizes interventions that strengthen complements. For example, in fisheries and aquaculture, FAO is supporting the

development of the African Confederation of Professional Organisations of Artisanal Fisheries (CAOPA) Action plan in Ghana, and capacity of women in Advocacy, in preparation for commemoration of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022). Similarly, FAO is strengthening the capacity of Women Dagua Processors (Marine waters) around the Indian Ocean in the United Republic of Tanzania towards reducing post-harvest losses by using hot air blow machines.

- 63 The cross-cutting themes of gender, youth and inclusion, are critical areas identified to be considered across all of FAO's programmatic work to ensure the achievement of the UN programming principle of leaving no one behind, as reflected in the FAO strategic narrative. Gender equality, social inclusion and youth have strategic relevance to all FAO regional priorities. By enhancing socio-economic sustainability, promoting fairer distribution of benefits, and unleashing the potential and contribution of important groups and actors of rural societies and economies, the integration of gender equality, social inclusion and youth can amplify the impact of FAO programmes on the ground. Gender equality, social inclusion and youth are also foundational to FAO's programmatic approach which, moving beyond activity and project-based approaches, aims to promote long term and strategic engagement with Member Countries and partners in the region, in support of countries' efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda and transformation of agrifood systems in Africa. In addition to the integration of these cross-cutting themes in all regional priority areas and programmes, FAO also devotes attention and resources to women and youth specific programming, which can create concrete opportunities for improving their skills and capacities, livelihoods, resilience and agency, including in agribusiness and value chain development, trade and markets, and climate action and natural resource management.

### **3. FAO's corporate priorities and flagship initiatives**

- 64 FAO's HiH Initiative strives to facilitate agrifood systems transformation and sustainable rural development accelerated through targeting the poorest and the hungry, differentiating territories and strategies, and bringing together all relevant dimensions through analysis and partnerships. FAO will continue to facilitate partnerships and provide advanced geo-spatial modelling and analytics through the Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform, to identify the biggest opportunities to raise the incomes and reduce the inequities and vulnerabilities of rural populations. Currently 25 countries in the Africa region are engaged in the HiH Initiative. FAO is supporting African country engagements through technical studies, specification of required investments, partner consultations, and investment in seed financing in the form of TCPs (Technical Cooperation Programme) that support country operations and can catalyse additional investments and technical support.
- 65 In September 2021, FAO launched its Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products: One Country One Priority Product (OCOP), aiming to develop green and sustainable value chains for Special Agricultural Products (SAPs). SAPs include various agricultural products with unique qualities and special characteristics associated with geographical locations and cultural heritage, which can significantly contribute to ensuring food security and healthy diets, supporting farmers' livelihoods and economic growth while protecting the environment and biodiversity. The Africa region OCOP initiative was launched at a workshop in March 2022 that brought together governments and other key stakeholders in the region. The Africa Regional Action Plan is being developed and will contribute directly to the implementation of Global OCOP Action Plan.
- 66 FAO's 1 000 Digital Villages Initiative aims to convert 1 000 villages across the world into digital hubs - with the aim of supporting the transformation of agrifood systems. Furthermore, FAO is operationalizing the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture to provide a venue for dialogue, policy-making, and strengthening of the linkages between agriculture and digital economy fora, supporting governments to enhance the benefits of digital agriculture and leapfrog by learning from their peers, while addressing potential concerns. Building on FAO's 1 000 Digital Villages Initiative, a Pilot Digital Villages Initiative (DVI) is being implemented in seven countries

in Africa. Partnerships with stakeholders and partners in the framework of the Green Cities initiative have been launched in Africa.

#### **IV. Towards a reinvigorated business model**

67 With the alignment of Regional Priorities with the Programme Priority Areas, using the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, MTP 2022-25 and PWB 2022-23, FAO in Africa is well positioned to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of technical support to country offices and enhance the coordination with governments, development partners and regional and national stakeholders. The reinvigorated business model includes:

- **Strengthening results-based management**
  - A results-based framework underpins the 15 programme work areas described in paragraph 49 above, linking the four Regional Priorities, PPAs, and SDG targets. This results-based framework is applied to the identification of country outputs with SMART indicators and SDG targets for 2022-23.
  - Mapping of country and regional office outputs to Regional Priorities and PPAs ensure an integrated results framework from Country Office to Regional Office to Corporate Outputs.
  - Recruitment of a full time Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer in the Regional Office created additional technical expertise to strengthen results-based management in Africa.
- **Incorporating normative and standard setting work**
  - Several normative and standard setting work areas emerged from the integrated work planning process, with clear work plans to facilitate engagement across FAO.
  - Technical and Normative work is one of the areas where changes were proposed under the Country Office Transformation. This includes specific proposals to improve efficiency and effectiveness at different levels of FAO.
- **Delivering as One FAO in Africa**
  - The reform at regional level encompasses programmatic, operational and delivery solutions to make Regional, Subregional and Country Offices more efficient and agile in the delivery of FAO programmes. The integration of programme leadership teams irrespective of duty stations across the region ensures that key programmatic issues are more closely embedded at subregional and country offices levels. This reform also facilitates greater engagement with partners and strengthening our agility to respond to member countries and partners requests.
  - The focus on an integrated multi-disciplinary team for each programmatic priority ensures a critical mass in core areas of work and provides greater flexibility to shift human and financial resources across and within programmes and subregions.
- **Transformative partnerships**
  - Underpinning the business model in Africa are strategic partnerships with existing and new partners in the public sector, private sector, civil society, and academia. FAO in Africa collaborated with the African Union (AU) and other partners to engage policy makers in the region on matters of strategic significance to agrifood systems transformation. Other examples of collaboration include with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)/Africa Green Revolution Forum (AGRF), in which FAO engaged the private sector and youth in setting the policy, advocacy, programming and investment agenda for timely COVID-19 response and recovery in the Africa region, as well as with the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture

(RUFORUM) to mobilize the academia in support of the agrifood systems transformation agenda.

- FAO in Africa leveraged opportunities for innovative funding and financing – through joint planning and programming with Development Finance Institutions (DFI's) such as African Development Bank and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in key areas, including agricultural digitalization, fisheries and aquaculture, livestock policy and investment, climate smart agriculture, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) development, natural resources restoration/restoration of ecosystem services.

- **Efficiency and innovative approach**

- Programmatic approach: the review of the structure in the Africa region adopts a programmatic approach that integrates technical, operational, investment and policy support.
- The FAO Country Offices Transformation addresses the main obstacles to improving efficiency and effectiveness of country offices. Following intensive work involving country, sub-regional, and regional offices, changes are being proposed in seven major areas and a clear process to follow up on the recommendation is in place.

- **Managing risk and uncertainty**

- FAO in Africa is accelerating enhanced use of digital technologies– to operate in an environment of increasing risk and uncertainty that continue to challenge effective and efficient delivery of the Organization's work programme prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Africa, the regional office is collaborating closely with HQ to maximize use of the Organization's Digital Portfolio that includes more than 250 software products and investments that support the delivery of FAO's work, focusing more on re-use and scaling up of solutions rather than reinvention.
- Digital tools for data collection and remote sensing are playing a significant role in surveillance and impact assessment to curb the spread of Desert Locusts through continuous surveillance, ground, and air control methods. They are being extensively utilized to support FAO's COVID-19 response and recovery as well as corporate initiatives such as the Pilot Digital Village Initiative in Africa and the HiH Initiative.
- FAO Africa aims to further catalyse digital technologies and digital platforms for impact using data and real-time information to provide new opportunities to react more quickly in an environment of increasing risk and uncertainty.