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JOINT MEETING

**Hundred and Thirty-fourth Session of the Programme Committee and
Hundred and Ninety-fourth Session of the Finance Committee**

Rome, 7 November 2022

Update on FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs)

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) was adopted in 2018 by the UN General Assembly as “*the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*” The UNSDCF serves as the polestar of all UN country-level activity, identifying specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets for each country and serves as the results framework against which contributing UN entities will be held collectively and individually accountable.
- The timing of the UNSDCF process is negotiated between the Resident Coordinator (RC) and the government. At the inception stage, UN country teams (UNCTs) prepare the Common Country Analysis (CCA). This integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based joint analysis of the context for sustainable development in a country becomes the foundation for the design and periodic adjustment of the UNSDCF.
- FAO has adjusted its main planning and programming instrument at country level – the Country Programming Framework (CPF) – to ensure that it is now fully derived from the UNSDCF, as required by the UN development system repositioning. Thus, FAO CPF formulation starts only when the relevant UNSDCF steps have been completed and endorsed by the government. As part of the CPF quality assurance, the country’s RC confirms the CPF’s full alignment with the UNSDCF.
- To ensure FAO’s role in placing sustainable agrifood systems transformation and agriculture high on the political agenda, the FAO Representative (FAOR) engages with the RC and UN system throughout the preparation of the UNSDCF roadmap and UN CCA.
- FAO country offices have actively participated in the negotiation and formulation of 87 UNSDCFs from 2019 to September 2022. Upon the signing of the UNSDCF, 43 CPFs have been endorsed by the end of September 2022. Indicative timing for the forthcoming 62 UNSDCF processes in which FAO country offices will be involved, is for an additional six countries in 2022, 42 countries in 2023 and 14 countries in 2024.
- SDGs are the pivotal link between FAO’s Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) under the *four betters* and the country results planned in the UNSDCFs/CPF. Hence, FAO’s CPFs link country results to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 through the SDGs and related PPAs.
- FAO is putting in place mechanisms to more fully bring to bear FAO’s wealth of technical, policy and investment capacity at country level, including leveraging integrated data and related analytical tools available through the Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform and developing ready-to-use information about the PPAs to facilitate FAO’s positioning in dialogues with partner agencies on agrifood systems transformation, and to assist FAO’s engagement at the critical stage of the CCA formulation.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE JOINT MEETING

The Joint Meeting is invited to take note of the UNSDCF formulation process and the adjustments FAO has made accordingly to its CPF, as well as the enhanced arrangements to facilitate robust engagement in the country level programming.

Background

1. In September 2015, United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and priority objectives to end poverty and hunger leaving no one behind. As a UN specialized agency, FAO has a key role to play in supporting the achievement of countries' national objectives and SDG targets related to food and agriculture.¹

2. On 31 May 2018, the General Assembly Resolution 72/279 elevated the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) as *"the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."* The UNSDCF is meant to be the polestar of all UN country-level activities. It identifies specific SDG targets for each country and serves as the results framework against which contributing UN entities will be held collectively and individually accountable.

3. The UNSDCF now guides the entire programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda. It determines and reflects the UN development system's contributions in the country and shapes the configuration of UN assets required inside and outside the country.

4. At the inception stage of the UNSDCF process, UN country teams (UNCTs) prepare the Common Country Analysis (CCA), which is an integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based joint analysis of the context for sustainable development in a country. This analysis is to be updated on an annual basis and becomes the foundation for the design and periodic adjustment, as needed to adapt to changes, of the United Nations programmatic response through the UNSDCF.

I. FAO's adaptation of its country programming

5. To strengthen the Organization's engagement in the UN development system repositioning at country level, FAO adjusted its Country Programming Framework (CPF) process, to ensure that the Organization's main planning and programming instrument at country level is now fully derived from the UNSDCF, as required by the UN development system repositioning.

6. The FAO CPF formulation starts only when the relevant UNSDCF steps have been completed and endorsed by the government. As part of the CPF quality control process, the FAO Representative (FAOR) requests the Resident Coordinator's (RC) confirmation of the CPF's full alignment with the UNSDCF, thereby assuring that FAO builds on the collective UN development system's efforts to support country ownership and address national SDG priorities and gaps.

7. At the same time, FAO's country level process, as reflected in the CPF design, also contributes to shaping the formulation of the UNSDCF, thus ensuring that agrifood systems transformation concerns and related SDGs are well integrated and prioritized in the UN common planning documents.

II. Status of FAO's participation in UNSDCF

8. The UNSDCF formulation process and timing is negotiated between the RC and the government. To ensure FAO's role in placing sustainable agrifood system transformation and agriculture high on the political agenda, the FAOR engages with the RC and UN system throughout the preparation of the UNSDCF roadmap and UN CCA.

9. FAORs develop their CPF once the UNSDCF has been endorsed by the government, with the principle of UNSDCF outcomes copied verbatim and aligning the FAO CPF cycle with the UNSDCF cycle. Under this model, FAO country offices have actively participated in the negotiation and

¹ FAO Constitution Article I.1 *"The term "agriculture" and its derivatives include fisheries, marine products, forestry and primary forestry products."*

formulation of 87 UNSDCF processes from 2019 to September 2022. Upon the signing of the UNSDCF, 43 CPFs have been endorsed by the end of September 2022.

10. Indicative timing for the forthcoming 62 UNSDCF processes in which FAO country offices will be involved, is for an additional six countries in 2022, 42 countries in 2023 and 14 countries in 2024, noting that adherence to these timelines is coordinated by RCs with the governments.

III. Bottom-up and top-down programming in FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31

11. FAO's move to an SDG-based framework provides a common compass across the layers of the Organization and with UN and other partners, to catalyse and channel FAO's work to deliver the results agreed at country level. The SDGs are the pivotal link between FAO's Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) under the *four betters* and the country results planned in the UNSDCF/CPF processes. With this approach, FAO's CPFs, as the central FAO programming tool at country level, link country results directly with SDGs through the related PPAs to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

12. This has the twofold advantage of better reflecting the diversity of countries' situations under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, while fully embracing and engaging with the UN development system and coordinated UN work at country level. This approach also facilitates streamlined planning and reporting by FAO country offices, allowing for a more efficient use of country-level resources.

IV. Initiatives to ensure FAO's robust engagement and positioning in UNDS repositioning

13. The Organization continues to actively explore mechanisms to further strengthen country capacities to engage in the UNSDCF processes and bring multisectoral technical support to these processes in an effective and timely manner, as well as to better connect technical expertise in a rapid manner to respond to countries' needs.

14. As part of a capacity building learning initiative in collaboration with the UN System Staff College, 112 colleagues from 88 FAO offices (82 country offices, 5 regional offices, and headquarters) completed a two-week, virtual workshop to be better equipped to engage and contribute to the design of pathways of change for development solutions, including how the interaction and roles of partners contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

15. Through FAO's reinvigorated business model and skills acquired to better engage in the UN development system repositioning, regional offices are facilitating coordination among technical streams aiming at channelling FAO's analytical support in a more integrated way to decentralized offices. In addition, the Organization is putting in place mechanisms to more fully bring to bear its wealth of technical, policy and investment capacity – including leveraging integrated data and related analytical tools available through the Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform – to provide FAO country teams access to data and analytics at the national level coming from different FAO domains. The aim is to increase the Organization's capacities to support the inclusion of information on agrifood systems in documents such as Common Country Assessments.

16. To strengthen the monitoring of UNSDCF formulation processes, a user-friendly summary dashboard system allows FAO to collect and monitor the formulation progress of all UNSDCF and CPF cycles for all countries. The dashboard is updated on a regular basis reflecting the official UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) information and inputs available to FAO focal points in the regional offices.

17. Responding to requests from FAO teams at the decentralized level for ready-to-use information about the PPAs, FAO is augmenting its CPF guidance materials to include information that articulates the technical offering and Theory of Change of the 20 PPAs in the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. This information will be used by FAO regional and country teams, in collaboration with headquarters, to facilitate FAO's positioning in dialogues with partner agencies on

agrifood systems transformation, and will be particularly helpful in assisting FAO's engagement at the critical stage of the CCA formulation.