Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The Hand-in-Hand Initiative

An FAO initiative to reduce extreme poverty, eliminate hunger, improve nutrition, increase agricultural productivity and rural living standards, and contribute to global economic growth.[1]

1. CONCEPT

An evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative, the Hand-in-Hand Initiative represents a bold step to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG2) by accelerating agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development. In doing so, the Initiative contributes to the attainment of all the other Sustainable Development Goals.

Using the most sophisticated tools available, including advanced geo-spatial modeling and analytics, Hand-in-Hand identifies 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 understand a comprehensive view of full economic opportunities and to improve targeting and tailoring of policy interventions, innovation, finance and investment, and institutional reform accordingly.

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. It works to improve food system capacities to deliver nutrition and healthy diets for everyone and improving household livelihoods by reducing extreme poverty.

The Initiative prioritizes countries where national capacities and international support are most limited or where operational challenges, including natural or man-made crises, are greatest. This is in keeping with the UN's commitment to "leave no one behind."

In tapping under-supported potential of agriculture and agri-food value chains to lift large numbers of rural poor out of poverty, the Initiative ensures that UN norms and standards are fully reflected in policies that advance all three — economic, social and environmental — pillars of sustainable development. To this end, the Initiative promotes the sustainable use of biodiversity, natural resources and ecosystem services. It supports climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience. It also supports key objectives of the 2030 Agenda for gender empowerment and youth employment, and improves rural-urban linkages and sustainable development of food systems. It provides data and analysis to evaluate interactions and trade-offs among objectives and actions, helping to pinpoint key bottlenecks and focus policy dialogue.

[1] FAO Charter: http://www.fao.org/3/K8024E/K8024E.pdf

FAO leads the Initiative in close collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Elements of the Initiative can be supported through the UN system with collaboration. In addition, cognizant of the complexity of problems faced by these countries which go further than food and agriculture, the Initiative also aims to partner with players like multilateral development banks (MDBs), universities, research centers, private sector, and civil society.

With a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, the Initiative aims to deliver a first set of benchmark results by 2023.

TODAY'S CHALLENGES

1. In countries where agriculture is still in the early stages of development, typically more than half of the population depends on agriculture, directly or indirectly, for incomes and access to food. But a majority of farmers, fishers, pastoralists, forest peoples and indigenous peoples in rural areas and are disproportionately poor, undernourished and vulnerable to conflicts and weather shocks, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. They find themselves in a situation where they cannot nourish themselves or break out of the poverty trap due to low productivity and limited knowledge.

2. The current approach to rural development aid is too fragmented and small-scale to generate transformative change. A holistic approach is required that recognizes the diverse economic, social and environmental webs in which rural people earn their living and strive to improve opportunities for themselves, their children, and their communities. The holistic approach must respond to the needs of the highly vulnerable populations and consider responses to mitigate and overcome the effects of crises and shocks.

3. The international community has failed to adequately invest in the development potential of agriculture, even though this is a major economic sector and the most important pathway to lift the extreme poor out of poverty and hunger, and rural economies. There is a need for a better understanding of appropriate policy measures to achieve full potential of agricultural development.

HAND-IN-HAND SOLUTIONS

1. Hand-in-Hand seeks to strengthen existing international cooperation and fill the void where it is absent. Within countries, the Initiative offers data and tools to identify where investments could have the most impact. Using a multi-dimensional GIS data platform that visualizes economic, statistical, and geospatial analyses, it enables a better-targeted and more effective programming for rural transformation. The geospatial rendering of agricultural topographies highlights key relationships among diverse economic, social, and environmental variables to direct investment in order to support those engaged in agricultural activities to reach their full sustainable income potential.

2. Hand-in-Hand targets the poorest of the poor in the most vulnerable, low-income, low-capacity countries to unlock agriculture's full development potential. Where institutional capacity remains low, FAO works together with partners to fill any technical, policy, and governance vacuums.

3. Building on its country presence and goodwill, FAO convenes partnerships to deliver the means of implementation. This means bringing in the International Financial Institutions, such as the World Bank Group (WBG), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the African Development Bank (AfDB), Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (ADB), to put technical and policy knowledge into action. It also means attracting private sector investment by bringing information on areas of investment for development. We believe that when all public and private actors join forces, it is possible to achieve results that transform lives.

PRINCIPLES

While we seek to eradicate poverty and hunger, our focus is on **enhancing agricultural productivity to improve nutrition, raise rural living standards and contribute to global economic growth** in accord with FAO's mandate. We are committed to working together with priority countries to ensure **national ownership and leadership**. We draw on our decades-long relationships with Member States to move this forward.

We seek to empower poor and vulnerable rural populations, increase their net earnings from both farm and off-farm occupations. This is in line with the 2030 Agenda and its recognition that **equitable growth and inclusive structural transformation are key to lifting people out of poverty**. As such, we work on the principle that the positive impact of the Initiative should be available to as many stakeholders as possible through improved agricultural practices, through upgrading and diversification of post-production value chains that generate employment, especially for women and youth, and by strengthening models for diverse agri-food profits.

We **improve coordination** by building on existing structures and synergies with other Sustainable Development Goals. We work closely with **potential resource partners throughout the process** all the way through **monitoring and evaluating the Initiative's performance**.

APPROACH

Hand-in-Hand works to create many different types of opportunities in the food and agriculture sectors. It works on areas of food and nutritional security, trade, food systems, and value chains, as well as areas of protracted crises.

Within countries, the Initiative works on territories where it can obtain maximum agricultural potential "profits," that is, net market earnings of the poor from a variety of activities. The Initiative focuses not only on increasing producer "productivity," but more importantly, on improving realized incomes in the

short-run along with sustainability for the longer-term. The Initiative works to improve the net earnings of individuals and also generate the revenues to support public investment in the social, environmental, and climatic foundations of sustainability, taking into consideration a wide range of actions with different pathways and trade-offs among social value.

By focusing on optimizing "net market earnings," Hand-in-Hand looks closely into supply and demand for goods and services, including farmers' access to markets and the need to improve the share of income they receive for their products or labor. The rural poor, even those engaged in farming in some way, typically earn their living from a variety of activities that are often part-time, piecework, or seasonal. All these activities can be compared on a common metric of individual, social or external profits against alternative uses of labor and resources.

2. OPERATIONALIZATION

2.1 OPERATIONAL MODES

Hand-in-Hand is designed to work in countries that have multiple donors and existing coordination mechanisms, as well as in those that lack broad or strong donor support.

In the first case, which is the situation in most developing countries, FAO will offer its multidimensional GIS data platform to host countries and the existing international partners to identify critical areas of policy intervention and public investment to unlock the potential for ending poverty and hunger. This approach, **the first operational mode**, is for countries like Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Haiti. The goal is to complement existing information and bolster existing coordination mechanisms — the UN system, the humanitarian system, and all the different agencies — by providing data analysis and visualizations that help decision-makers understand better where investments, technology and innovation, and policy change can be most efficient and effective.

In countries that lack strong donor support, Hand-in-Hand will identify new donors and give them access to the GIS data platform. This approach, **the second operational mode,** is for countries like Eritrea or Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that have few donor partners.

2.2 MATCHMAKING

The Initiative's "matchmaking" will depend on variety of operational contexts. **The first type of matchmaking helps attract more donors and match them with countries.** This type of "matchmaking" will be more important in the second operational mode mentioned earlier. FAO welcomes new donors, even if a recipient country already has a large donor base.

In the second type, Hand-in-Hand provides the GIS data platform to countries and donors to help them identify investment gaps, helping farmers achieve a level of potential that will allow them to move out of

poverty. Right now, because of certain inefficiency or market failure, farmers and the rural poor are not able to reach their potential. Identifying investment gaps could help existing donors prioritize their interventions or target their interventions differently.

The third type of matchmaking is for agencies that make investments in countries, such as multilateral development banks, including WBG, IDB, AfDB, ADB, and players like the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). By meeting their information needs, FAO helps them identify investment gaps. FAO has agreed with WBG to roll out Hand-in-Hand in three pilot countries in early 2020. With IDB, FAO has identified countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region where the Initiative could be launched.

By identifying investment gaps for donors and multilateral organizations, the Initiative coordinates and complement efforts. For instance, if a donor decides to invest in building an organic coffee value chain in Ethiopia, there is a need to build an infrastructure, including road or energy networks. Subsequently, investment banks could be willing to invest in this, and Hand-in-Hand partners could complement those activities by developing the whole value chain, instead of just focusing on productivity that do not take into account other important infrastructure issues.

Finally, **the fourth type of matchmaking aims to attract the private sector.** Hand-in-Hand reduces risks and identifies investment gaps in areas where it is profitable for the private sector to operate. This type of matchmaking concerns areas where the potential returns are significant — as much as US$7 or US$8 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) per capita per day, or even more. These are areas where, if farmers can reach their potential frontier, they would be able to move out of poverty.

FAO is coordinating with International Finance Corporation (IFC), as it carries out this type of work in poorest countries where the World Bank Group's International Development Association (IDA) works. Additionally, IFC and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) are lowering risks and using blended finance to attract private companies to invest in these countries. For organizations like IFC and IDB Invest, an independent affiliate of IDB, having access to Hand-in-Hand's GIS data platform helps bring in the private sector for high potential returns. For Hand-in-Hand partners, it enables them to link with smallholders in areas with high levels of poverty.

2.3 GIS DATA PLATFORM

Central to Hand-in-Hand is the use of data and modeling to target investments. Poverty maps are widely-used tools to guide rural development policies, and maps of agro-ecological zones have helped prioritize agricultural investments. But Hand-in-Hand is the first of its kind that combines poverty, market, agro-ecological, and farm-level information to identify agricultural areas where there is potential for farmers to achieve their potential income and move out of poverty. The topography platform can also estimate returns of investments and match resources with needs. In addition, FAO will provide all the policy tools it has to bring solutions to areas where there are significant opportunities for farmers to increase their

income; for areas where agriculture in its current conditions is not a feasible solution, it will bring alternative solutions that could stimulate non-farm incomes and attract investments.[2]

2.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Based on preliminary estimations, FAO projects that by 2030, between 6-10 percent of the undernourished people (33-104 million) in the current priority countries will no longer be undernourished thanks to the Initiative. Additionally, FAO estimates that the Initiative will help reduce poverty by 8-15 percent in the priority countries, which translates into between 41-160 million people escaping poverty.

The monitoring framework will have its first benchmark in 2023, four years after the start of the project, and the second benchmark in 2030. As the custodian of 21 SDG indicators, FAO will use them as the core monitoring tools to assess progress. FAO will track everything using its SDG indicators, as well as those collected by other UN agencies. FAO welcomes external evaluation of its progress by other agencies.

A red-yellow-green scorecard system will be used to track progress. Red indicates that a country is off-track and off-target to meet the Sustainable Development Goal 1 and 2. Yellow means on-track, but off-target. Green means on track and on target. For instance, Burkina Faso's poverty reduction target is to reduce the poverty rate from 43.7% to 21.7% by 2023, and presently, it has a green status.

To achieve this, FAO is developing in all participating countries a dashboard initiative as a means to capture, analyze, and visualize data on FAO's interventions and their impact on the ground, incorporating several functions. Even the most basic versions of the dashboard should lead to more accurate and timely delivery tracking, helping managers to adjust and realign programs and activities to meet needs and agreed goals. In more sophisticated forms, the dashboard can be a part of a geo-referenced impact-monitoring system that captures the impact of FAO's work, and facilitate accurate reporting to the Member States and resource partners. The information management dashboard plays an important role in feeding the Initiative's data platform (see Section 4).

The dashboard has been developed taking into account the ongoing development of more integrated corporate monitoring systems within FAO and will therefore be easily adapted to any new systems.

3. TARGET COUNTRIES SELECTIONS

The list of Hand-in-Hand priority countries is constantly evolving. The Initiative prioritizes those countries in situations that put large numbers of people at risk of being left behind. The intention is to provide a special level of support to help the countries overcome limited capacities or natural- or man-made crises in order to accelerate progress toward SDG 1 and 2. These countries can largely coincide

[2] For details, see the upgraded policy portal: http://www.fao.org/policy-support/vision/en/

with those that have been classified as off-track, off-target, or both. Off-track means they are seeing hunger and extreme poverty on the rise. They are off-target because they would not be able to achieve the SDGs indicators by 2030.

The five groups considered:

a) **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**, which contains a list of 47 developing countries[3] that exhibit the lowest levels of socioeconomic development according to three criteria: poverty, human resource (which includes nutrition, health, and education), and economic vulnerability.[4]

b) **Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs)**, which contains a list of 32 developing countries that lack territorial access to the sea, situation that imposes serious constraints on their economic and social development.[5]

c) **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**, which comprises 58 countries that, given their geographical characteristics, share the same economic and social challenges that hinder their development progress.[6] Furthermore, these characteristics make them highly vulnerable to climate variability and extreme weather events.

d) **Food crisis countries**, which is the list of 25 countries considered to be in an extreme situation of acute hunger in 2018, requiring urgent humanitarian assistance.[7]

e) **Highly populated countries**, which is a list of 15 LDCs whose population is above the average population of the Least Developed countries.

FAO combined these five categories, thereby creating new resulting categories to select the priority countries. The first set of countries comes from the combination of country categories.

Least Developed Land Locked Countries (LDLCs), which results from the intersection of the LDCs and the LLDCs. This results in 17 countries:

1	Afghanistan
2	Bhutan
3	Burkina Faso
4	Burundi
5	Central African Republic

[3] https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/ldc-data-retrieval.html
[4] The UN Economic and Social Council's criteria for identification of LDCs.
[5] https://unctad.org/en/pages/aldc/Landlocked%20Developing%20Countries/List-of-land-locked-developing-countries.aspx
[6] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sids/list
[7] http://www.fsinplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/GRFC_2019-Full_Report.pdf

6	Chad
7	Ethiopia
8	Lao People's Democratic Republic
9	Lesotho
10	Malawi
11	Mali
12	Nepal
13	Niger
14	Rwanda
15	South Sudan
16	Uganda
17	Zambia

Least Developed Small Islands Countries (LDSIs), which results from the intersection of the list of the LDCs and the SIDS. This results in nine additional countries:

18	Comoros
19	Guinea-Bissau
20	Haiti
21	Kiribati
22	Sao Tome and Principe
23	Solomon Islands
24	Timor-Leste
25	Tuvalu
26	Vanuatu

Conditional to not being already in the list of countries that resulted from the two combined categories, FAO added a second set of countries in a sequential manner. They were added if they were part of the list of food crisis countries, and then if they were part of the list of highly populated countries. This led to the addition of 14 food crisis countries, and 4 highly populated countries, respectively.

The additional countries included by the food crisis criteria:

27	Bangladesh
28	Democratic Republic of the Congo
29	Djibouti
30	Eswatini
31	Iraq

32	Kenya
33	Madagascar
34	Mozambique
35	Pakistan
36	Somalia
37	Sudan
38	Syrian Arab Republic
39	Yemen
40	Zimbabwe

Finally, the countries included due to the high population criteria:

41	Angola
42	Myanmar
43	Nigeria
44	United Republic of Tanzania

Initially, a total of 44 priority countries were selected. The list has since expanded to include some 20 more countries.

Some countries have requested to be included in the Initiative and have been subsequently added following a case-by-base assessment. For example, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador in Central America have been added because they have significant levels of hunger and all forms of malnutrition and extreme poverty at sub-national level, even though that is not evident at the national level.

There are also countries that are playing both roles, the role of being a recipient and a donor country. Countries could also fall into food crises. As a result, the list of priority countries will keep evolving. All of this is done on a voluntary basis.

Countries can also raise funding to support data collection and analysis, as part of building levels 3, 4 and 5 of the GIS data platform (see next section). They can also volunteer to provide technical assistance to recipient countries as part of South-South learning. If countries are interested in joining the Initiative, FAO will work with them to find extra-budgetary resources to make it happen.

In less developed and largely populated countries, such as Bangladesh and Nigeria, the Initiative will be rolled out at a sub-national level, because it is at this level that they face challenges of assisting a significant number of extremely poor and undernourished populations.

FAO will continue to provide policy and technical support to all its Member States, regardless of whether or not they are part of the Initiative. In the Hand-in-Hand priority countries, FAO is focused on accelerating SDG 1 and SDG 2 progress. All the Member States will benefit from this effort.

4. GIS Data Platform

TARGETING

FAO is using a Geographic Information System (GIS) to collect and analyze all available data from within the organization and other agencies. For example, FAO has detailed high-resolution data on soil maps, water, forestry, road network, crop areas, and crop calendar just to name a few. FAO is bringing all these data together in one common place to break down silos that used to exist within the organization.

Using an economic modelling tool, FAO has estimated agronomic and economic potential of farmers. The estimations are based on household surveys and global geospatial data to determine local agro-ecological and economic conditions — including accessibility to markets, poverty, altitude, water, roads, and land use. FAO has also considered the occurrence of shocks, such as weather or food prices, and farmers' production decisions. For example, if the potential frontier is US$1.90 per person per day in PPP terms, it means that it is not enough for farmers to escape poverty. Therefore, agriculture is not a solution to poverty — not today. Other mechanisms, including cash transfers, human capital and education, will have to be used to link the rural poor to alternative value chains to create labor opportunities.

The multi-dimensional GIS platform visualizes a country's agricultural topographies. It can identify different regions' needs and opportunities, recommend interventions, and match resources with needs more accurately, thereby reducing investment gaps. In countries like Peru, Honduras, and Guatemala, similar data platforms are already being used to support governments and aid agencies to prioritize their investment.

EXAMPLE: BURKINA FASO

On the poverty map of Burkina Faso (Figure 1), all of the country's high-poverty areas in the north, south and center (in red) appear the same. But when the poverty data are combined with data on access to markets and untapped agricultural income potential, the map changes.

The multi-layer map (Figure 2) shows that the areas in the north have low potential and low efficiency, but that the areas in the center, south, and east (with the dark green color) have high agricultural potential and low efficiency.

At risk of oversimplification, it can be said that the north of the country needs immediate assistance, such as social safety net programs and conditional cash transfers (Figure 3a shows the major activities FAO can implement). The policies there should also aim to build large-scale infrastructure development, like rural roads and electrical grids in the long-term.

Figure 1.

Poverty Map of Burkina Faso

Source: Author's calculations using the National Institute of Statistics and Demography (Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie, INSD) surveys, Questionnaire on Basic and Well-being Indicators (Questionnaire sur les Indicateurs de Base et de Bien-être, QUIBB) 2003, Integral Survey on Household Living Conditions (Enquête Intégrale sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages, EICVM) 2009, and Continuous Multisector Survey (Enquête Multisectorielle continue, EMC) 2014.

These types of activities can be implemented with our partners as the MDBs In the center, south and east of the country; investments should focus on addressing bottlenecks of whatever nature. That could be lowering production costs, improving the farmers' price realization or lowering risks for climate agro-ecology (see figure 3b for the activities that FAO can implement).

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Figure 2.

Building Topology of Micro-Regions for Burkina Faso

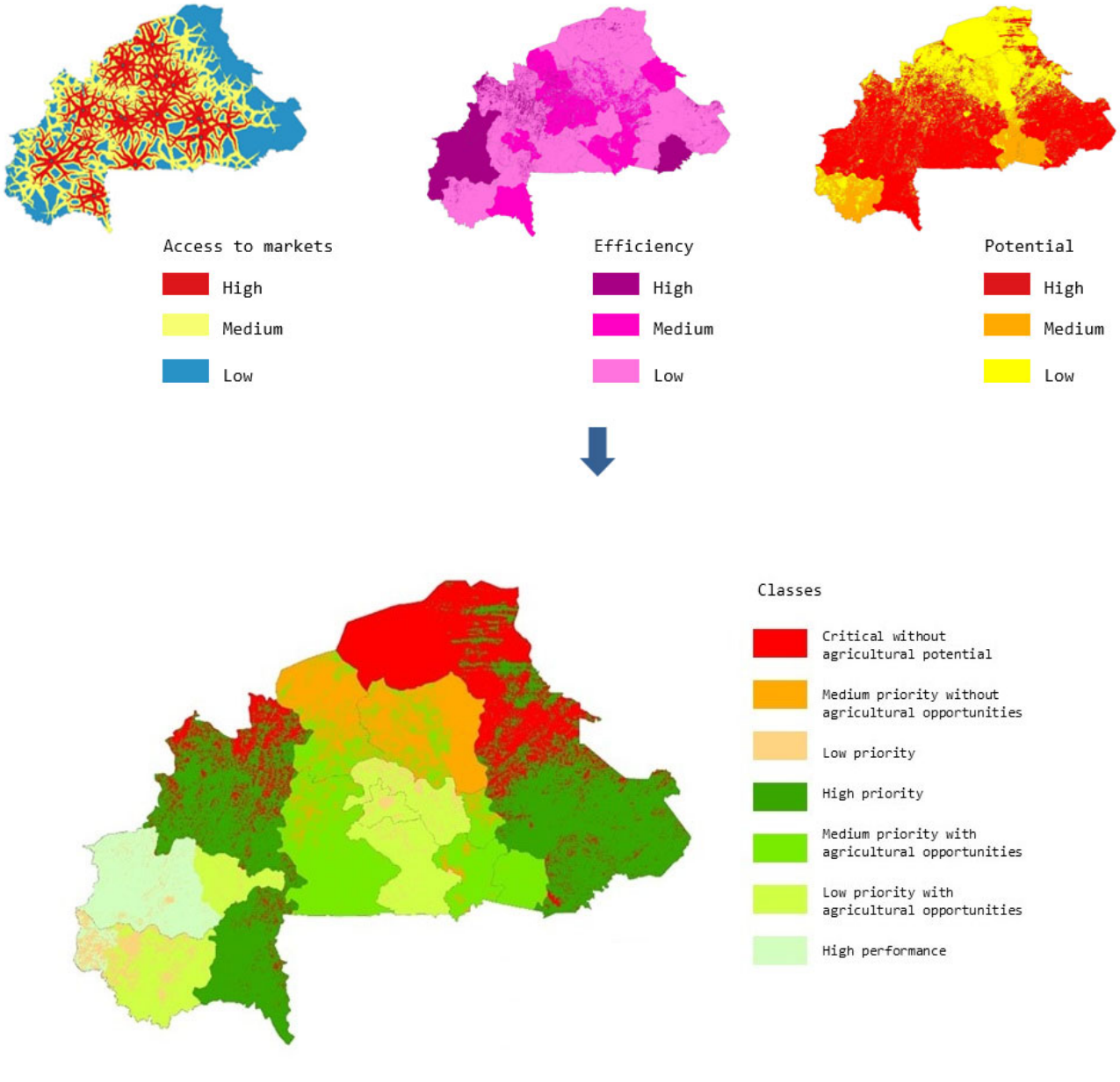

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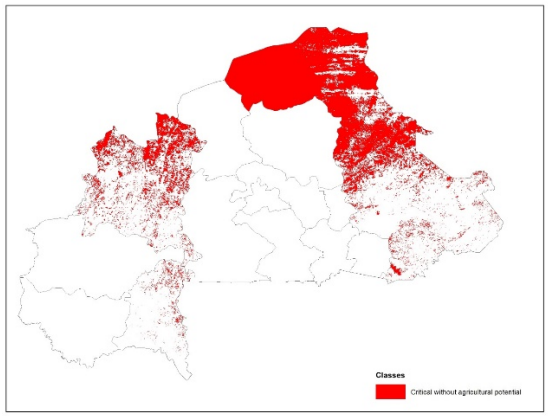
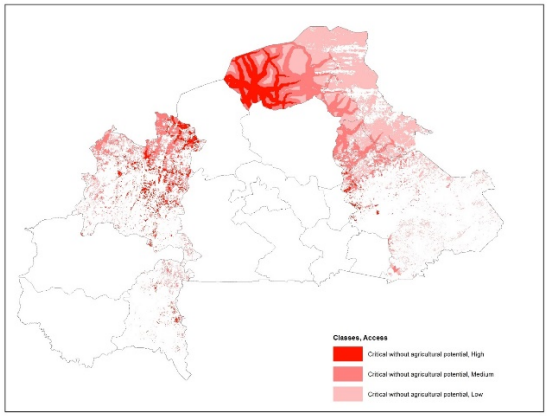
Figure 3.

a. Critical Areas without Agricultural Potential





Protecting the poorest of the poorest

Social Assistance

1. **Cash transfers.** direct, regular and predictable transfers that raise and smooth incomes to reduce poverty and vulnerability (conditional or unconditional)
2. **Social pensions.** are state pensions, a form of cash transfer targeted by age
3. **In kind-transfers.** are economic and livelihood asset transfers to households, facilitating income generation. School feeding programs are part of this.
4. **Public works programs.** provide jobs on infrastructure projects for cash or food.

Labor market interventions

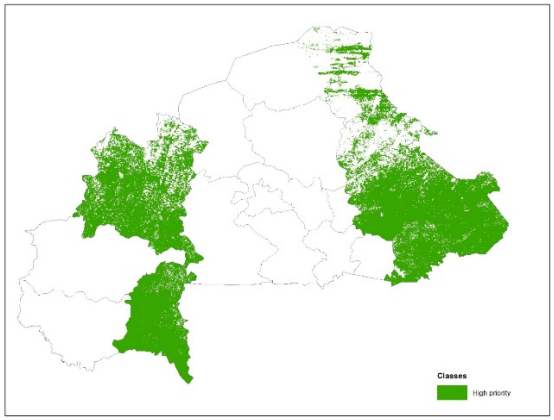
5. **Active labour market interventions.** aim to help the unemployed and the most vulnerable find jobs in sectors different to agriculture, through interventions such as job centers, training, and policies.
6. **Passive labour market interventions.** include maternity benefits, injury compensation, and sickness benefits for those already in work, financed by the employer. It also include changes in labour legislation.

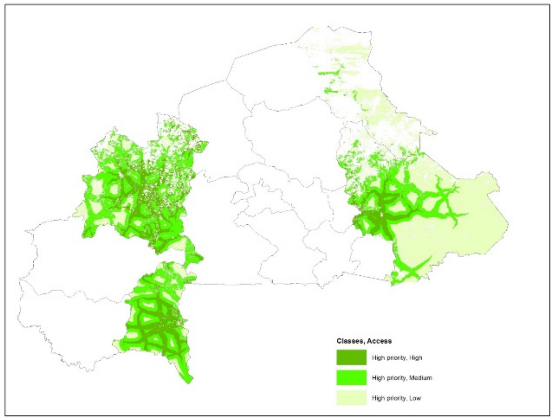
Social insurance

7. **Formal insurance schemes.** includes contributory pensions; health, unemployment, or disaster insurance; and funeral assistance

Figure 3.

b. High Priority Areas with Agricultural Potential





Opportunities to Drive Transformation

Efficient Supply Chains

1 **Inclusive supply chains.** Improve rural livelihoods for commercial smallholder farmers and SMEs

2 **Food chain improvement.** Efficiently process, store, transport food, food logistics. Reduce losses. Enhance nutrition.

3 **Enabling policies.** Improve existing policies reducing distortions and improving incentives for private sector participation

Sustainability Standards & Practices

4 **Climate-smart agriculture practices.** Ease pressure on natural resources.

5 **Clear global standards.** Ensure efficient use of land, water, labor.

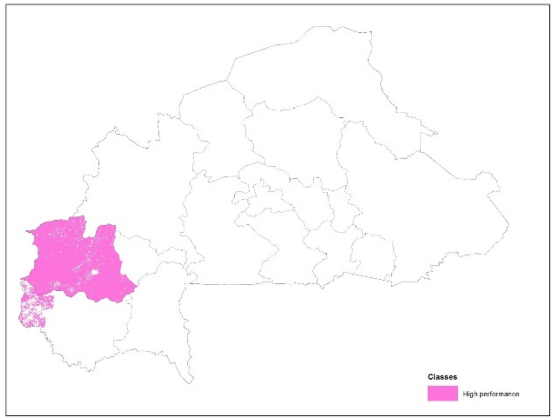
Innovation & Technology

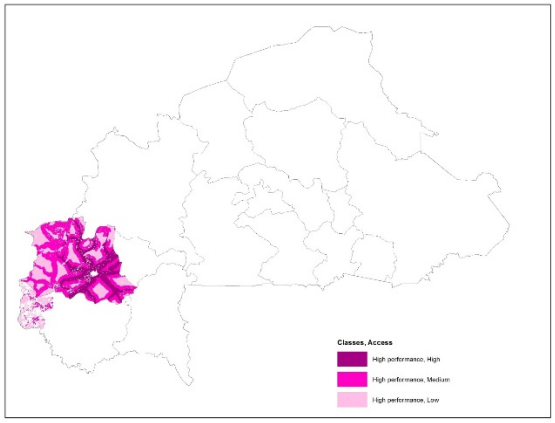
6 **Technology improvements.** Increase yield, resource productivity, traceability, nutrition, disease control.

7 **Business and financial model innovations.** Provide better products and services to farmers and value chain actors.

Figure 3.

c. High Performance Areas from Which to Learn





Opportunities to Learn

Evaluating best practices

1 **Identify successes.** In areas were agriculture has succeeded in reducing poverty

2 **Impact evaluation.** Implement rigorous impact and process evaluations of interventions.

Documenting best practices

3 **Document successful practices.** Document process and implementation.

4 **Document failures.** Document processes and implementation

Learning, within and south-south

5 **Develop a knowledge platform.** Web based platform of learning both within country and south-south learning.

6 **Capacity building e-leaning center.** Based on the practices identified develop a lab of e-learning which include in field experience sharing – learning tourism initiative

DATA AND GIS LABS

The Initiative will create two labs: a data lab and a GIS lab, which are fully integrated. The data lab will use modern technologies, including artificial intelligence, big data, access to remote sensing, etc., to collect data in areas like small islands where little data are available. It will also collect data to validate official data FAO has been using, creating a mechanism for data quality control. In doing so, the Initiative supports governments to improve the quality of their work.

FAO improves its data by making them public — including the Food Insecurity Experience Scale or the Poverty and Undernourishment Indicator — and receiving feedback. For example, FAO has been a part of the 50 x 2030 Initiative together with WBG and IFAD. As soon as FAO released its soil data to the public, researchers at the Wageningen University in the Netherlands came back with feedback.

The data lab will also have a text-mining system to assess the interventions that have been tested on different commodities in different locations and in different countries. FAO has already done this to assess food loss and waste, and the results were published in *The State of Food and Agriculture 2019*. FAO has been expanding on this to have data on extensions, productivity interventions, distortions, and government subsidies, so that it can build on the lessons learned.

It is important to be able to use data from other agencies. For example, if Hand-in-Hand's GIS data platform identifies an area as having high agricultural potential and if a possible intervention is to improve the farmers' efficiency by giving them access to digital technologies to produce crops, Hand-in-Hand partners would need to get information from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to find out whether the area already has a digital network installed. If there is no digital network, then the proposed intervention cannot be implemented. This is why linking all the data from FAO and from partner agencies is a critical part of the Initiative.

FAO is making arrangements and building partnerships to set up a data-sharing system in place. To date, FAO has signed formal data-sharing agreements with WBG, International Labor Organization (ILO), ITU, World Trade Organization (WTO), World Health Organization (WHO), WFP, IFAD, and IDB.

In summary, three streams of work on the use of big data and data science have started in parallel in three different areas:

- Text-mining techniques to produce advanced documentary analysis on good practices, investments, policies, etc.

- Geospatial data science to improve area and yield estimates and increase data granularity, especially in tropical and dryland areas, where the most vulnerable populations live.

- Big data solutions (web scrapping, crowdsourcing, machine learning) to combine data from structured and non-structured sources to fill in the information gaps.

INFORMATION LEVELS

FAO has identified five levels of information.

- Level 1 is the database that brings together all the data at FAO. All the FAO Member States benefit from them.

- At level 2, we will use the FAO data to create GIS linkages. All the FAO Member States benefit from them.

- Level 3 is the GIS-linked FAO data from level 2, plus data from other sources. This will be beneficial to countries that will work on accelerating progress toward SDG 1 and 2 under the prioritized list of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.

- At level 4, we add to level 3 the analyses of typologies to identify investment gaps and areas of potential and no potential. This information is useful for priority countries under the Initiative.

- Level 5 identifies specific investment gaps as well as potential projects that can be implemented to fill those gaps and remove inefficiencies. This level of information is useful for priority countries under the Initiative.

All countries will benefit from Level 1 - Level 3. If donors or countries that are not on the priority list of the Initiative are interested in investing in data collection and analysis at level 4 and 5, FAO will support them to do this. FAO under the Hand-in-Hand Initiative has set up a geospatial platform that has been able to accomplish up to level 3 information. The platform will be officially launched in a few months and bring together all geospatial information of FAO and its major partners. This platform (see Figure 4) will keep growing as new information is collected across FAO and its partners.

5. COMPLEMENTARITY

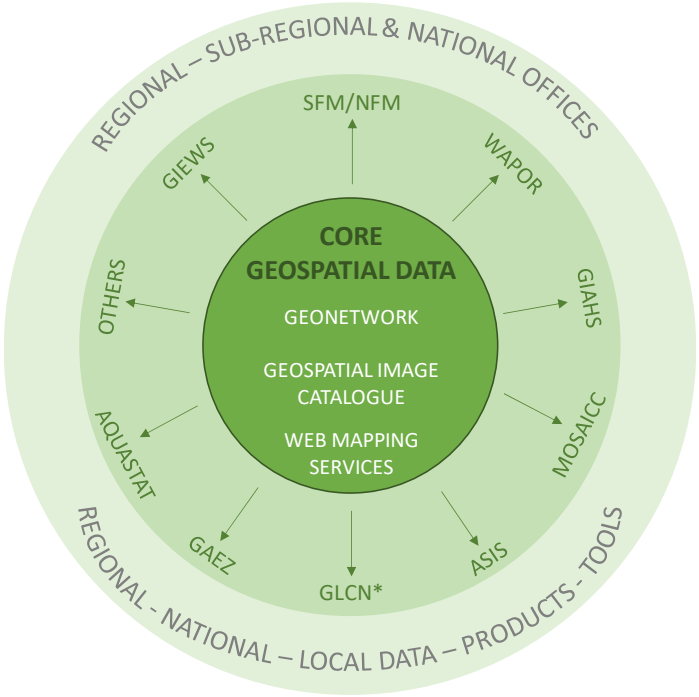
UN REFORM

The fundamental objective of the UN development system (UNDS) reform led by the Secretary-General is to make the entire UNDS more “fit for purpose” in supporting the highest ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. One can distinguish between short-term and longer-term objectives of the UN reform. A priority of the

reform so far has been to make the UN system more responsive, aligned, coherent, transparent, nimble and accountable to Member States and their international partners. However, there is also a commitment to repositioning and, over time, strengthening the assets and capabilities of the UN system to respond to the higher ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. This is not merely to improve the UN as a deliverer of direct services, but to reposition it as an infrastructure for improved collective action to achieve transformational change.

Figure 4.

Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform



Note: ***GIEWS***: Global Information and Early Warning System of Food and Agriculture; ***SFM/NFM***: Sustainable Forest Management and National Forest Monitoring System; ***WAPOR***: Water Productivity Open Access Portal; ***GIAHS***: Global Important Agriculture Heritage Systems; ***MOSAICC***: Modelling System for Agricultural Impacts of Climate Change; ***ASIS:*** Agricultural Stress Index System; ***GLCN***: Global Landover Network; ***GAEZ***: Global Agro-ecological Zones; ***AQUASTAT:*** AQUASTAT is the FAO global information system on water resources and agricultural water management; and ***OTHER:*** All other geospatial databases from our partners.

The Hand-in-Hand Initiative is fully supportive of both the letter and spirit of these short-term and longer-term objectives of the UN reform. It recognizes that promoting agricultural and food systems transformations in rural-urban context is not just an economic process. Rather, it also requires public investments in rural populations' health and education to build the social foundations of growth. It requires research and development to achieve environmental and climatic sustainability — it means

promoting innovations in practices, technologies and institutions, so that agri-food systems transformation protects and promotes sustainable use of biodiversity, natural resources and ecosystem services, and improves climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience. In this sense, **the Hand-in-Hand Initiative is a trigger to the full set of actions that a fully engaged UN systems approach can deliver and sustain.**

Specifically, Hand-in-Hand contributes to the integrated approaches of UN reform by achieving greater cooperation and deepening partnership among Rome-based agencies, as well as with actors across the UN system. It provides a technical foundation by bringing in a full spectrum of tools for the UN to achieve what needs to be done.

Achieving more integrated approaches to UN programming is certainly one of the most important and challenging elements that the UN Secretariat and Member States have agreed upon. It is essential in making the UN more effective and coherent. However, it is important to note that more integrated programming will not, by itself, deliver a UNDS reform that is appropriately supportive of the complex ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. There are other elements as well. The Secretary-General has spelled out these elements in his various reports to the United Nations Member States, starting in June 2017 and encapsulated it in the draft System-Wide Strategic Document tabled in July 2019.

The System-Wide Strategic Document describes the purpose of the UN reform as repositioning the UN system to be able to deliver a "UN offer" to Member States that is "demand-driven" (or country-led and -owned), "open" (based on many partnerships and focused on enabling actions by others), and "transformative." The last criterion is especially important. The System-Wide Strategic Document states clearly that in order to be transformative, the UN offer has to:

1. Focus on either promoting or adapting "structural transformations" through policies that support the achievement of the SDGs.

2. Identify and address the risks to ensure that no one is left behind.

3. Spell out the UN's contribution to establishing a robust enabling environment to strengthen and sustain national efforts and international collaboration to achieve transformative change over time.

The Hand-in-Hand Initiative is one of the first UN-sponsored initiatives to realize UN reform's core vision of how the UN can reposition itself to support transformative change. As such, **it is a ready-made framework for a bold FAO contribution to Common Country Analysis (CCA) to promote structural and economic transformation to deliver the SDGs.**

2021 FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

The Rome-based agencies are preparing for the Food Systems Summit, a major global conference, in late 2021. While many details are being finalized, the fundamental objectives are clear. FAO wants to recognize and strengthen the many independent initiatives that have emerged to transform different aspects of food systems. Many of these initiatives are aware of the interactions, dependencies and possible tradeoffs around interlinked issues, but they lack a common framing, a shared vision, and a strong science-policy interface.

The preparatory process for the summit — which will be highly inclusive, consultative and participatory — is designed to achieve the following three objectives:

1. To agree to a common definition of "food systems." Despite the obvious need, there is no widely agreed definition of food systems. As FAO made it possible for the UN to define "food security" during the 1996 World Food Summit, the 2021 summit will define the term for everyone.

2. To create a common vision — evolving around four broad objectives — across the SDGs: eradication of poverty; elimination of hunger and all forms of malnutrition, including obesity; protection and sustainable use of biodiversity, land, water, soil, marine, fishery, forestry, and ecosystem services; climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience. These four objectives touch upon all the SDGs and are essential for understanding the relationship between food systems and the 2030 Agenda. The challenge is to analytically understand the interactions between these objectives, including the interdependencies and tradeoffs between them.

3. To build a sophisticated, open data-sharing platform for modeling and analysis to construct scenarios — all with a view to enabling better-targeted policies, innovations, investment and governance.

The Hand-in-Hand Initiative will contribute to all of the above three objectives.

REGIONAL COMPONENTS

Simply using data to demonstrate that agriculture is key to national growth and sustainable development is not enough. Rather, it is essential to build strong coalitions of partners to support significant joint programming at the country level. This can only happen by forging alliances at regional and global levels with a view to collaborating on the CCA.

To date, there is no comprehensive database of all the different donors. There is a handful of initiatives that have tried to do this. One is from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), another from the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), and the third one is from the European Union (EU) Aid Explorer from the European Commission (EC). The U.S. Agency for International

Development (USAID) has a similar initiative for their Feed the Future project. FAO is trying to collate information on what donors and multilateral organizations are doing and in which locations. It has already met with the EC and USAID to gather this information.

Regional components are tremendously important. For example, in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region, Nigeria has the capacity to produce and ship fertilizers for all of Africa. But 80 percent of what is produced is sent to Latin American countries, like Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, because it is easier to ship the fertilizers to Latin America than across the African continent. This is because of trade agreements, specifically non-tariff barriers. To resolve this, FAO is working together with WTO and WBG.

Regional components are also important for the Central America Dry Corridor (CADC), which stretches from southern Mexico to Panama. In northern El Salvador, for example, the MCC built the Northern Transnational Highway, improving access to market. Yet, this has not improved agricultural sales or income in the area because it still suffers from past conflict and has an aging population. If the agricultural potential of the area can be tapped, it could supply food to Guatemala and Honduras in the CADC region. These are the types of challenges Hand-in-Hand can help address.

Regional aspects are part of Hand-in-Hand, even though the interventions are carried out at the country level. The Initiative aggregates information at the regional level to study the relationships among countries. FAO hopes that this Initiative will help attract transportation, communications and public utilities in the countries when investment gaps are identified.

While FAO will only work in areas under its mandate, it is committed to creating a process of partnership and complementarities. The goal is to create a common framework, so that anyone who accesses the GIS data platform will know which donors are working on what in which locations. While this is a long-term process, the goal is to set this up by 2030.

7. ROADMAP

FAO's senior management team has met with the Joint Finance and Program Committees and the Program Committee to brief the Member States. The Council was also briefed, and a side event to the Council Meeting took place in December 2019. The Director General has also begun contacting countries, seeking expressions of interest, and has met with ambassadors informally. FAO's senior management has been meeting with different departments and staff members, as well as regional offices and country representatives to keep them updated.

The aim is to identify pilot countries and set up the GIS data platform by yearend. In 2020, the Initiative will roll out in all the priority countries. A 4-year benchmark is defined for 2023 for evaluation.

Figure 5.

HAND-IN-HAND TENTATIVE ROADMAP