



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



**High Level Political Forum 2021
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“Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

**Inputs by Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO):
Technical Committees and Governing Bodies**

This document summarizes policy deliberations related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of FAO Technical and Governing bodies notably the FAO Council, FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO), the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) and other intergovernmental bodies hosted in FAO, notably, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), the Governing body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the Codex Alimentarius.

According to their respective mandates, bodies analyzed progress, key challenges and opportunities and provided policy guidance to ensure that integrated approaches to food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture and food systems are adopted at country level to support nationally agreed Sustainable Development Plans, Strategies, and Programmes, and promote accelerated actions and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.

The complete inputs of the above bodies are included as Annexes to this contribution.

a. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the interlinkages with other SDGs

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, hunger continued to increase with almost 690 million people still undernourished worldwide, showing an increase in hunger since 2014. Two billion people did not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food and three billion people could not afford healthy diets. This is exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have added up to 132 million people in 2020 as projected by ‘**The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020**’¹.

¹ SOFI, 2020. <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2020/en/>

Food systems directly employ over 1 billion people, and provide livelihoods to another 3.5 billion. COVID-19 mitigation and control measures and the emerging recession are having a profound economic impact putting the jobs and livelihoods of millions at risk, that could disrupt incomes and, by extension, food access². Without interventions to save lives and restore livelihoods, the number of hungry people could grow, especially with the pandemic expanding well into 2021.

Food markets continue to face uncertainties due to the prospect of weak economic growth and unstable energy and currency markets. Equally urgent is the need to address the compounding threat of the pandemic on existing crises - such as conflict, natural disasters, climate change, pests and plagues - that are already stressing food systems and triggering food insecurity and malnutrition around the globe, and threatening the progress in achieving the SDGs.

Smallholder farmers and their families are particularly vulnerable. COVID-19 has had a particularly negative impact on smallholder farmers, small-scale and artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, and there is a need to provide the appropriate support and foster resilience, especially for these vulnerable people. Local seed production and supply of quality seeds have been disrupted, for example, which has negatively impacted the livelihoods of small-scale farmers in conserving and using locally adapted plant varieties. Enabling smallholders and family farmers to access and participate in appropriate innovation, information and advisory services for sustainable agrifood systems is crucial³. Safeguarding the food security and livelihoods of those vulnerable farmers is critical to achieve the 2030 Agenda and all SDGs.

International standard-setting work was stalled due to the response measures to COVID-19 and presented new challenges for countries in overseeing the implementation of food standards, threatening in particular access to safe and nutritious food, which are key to the achievement of SDG 2 and SDG 3.

It is also important to note that according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the international trade of animals and animal products is not contributing to the spread of COVID-19⁴. There is currently no scientifically based evidence that humans can be infected with COVID-19 through food, including fish and fish products, or the packaging in which they are stored.

Maintaining the functioning of food value chains and keeping markets open is of particular concern, especially with respect to the lives, livelihoods and nutritional status of those who are least able to cope with the **impacts of the COVID-19 crisis**.

b. Actions, policy guidance, progress, challenges and areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the SDGs and to the theme within the area under the purview of your intergovernmental body

The HLPF may wish to consider the following action points, which were extracted from the various submissions by FAO's governing bodies and technical committees included in the Annexes, in particular:

- Note the significance of **sustainable food systems as a framework for** achieving the 2030 Agenda and encourage all stakeholders to **adopt a food systems lens**, especially in view of the added urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic, to address the multiple negative effects on food systems towards more

² UN Policy Brief, 2020.

https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_food_security.pdf.

³ COAG27 <http://www.fao.org/3/nd410en/nd410en.pdf>.

⁴ [New World Trade Organization paper explores linkages between trade and the spread of diseases of animal origin, November 2020.](#)

sustainable and resilient models, emphasizing the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental).

- Request the UN Development System and Secretariat to continue supporting Members in developing sustainable food systems and to continue to provide full support to the preparatory process towards the **2021 UN Food Systems Summit**.
- Acknowledge the central role of a **sustainable food systems** approach to contribute to healthy diets and address the global challenge of malnutrition, particularly in the most vulnerable countries.
- Welcome progress and ongoing reporting of the FAO **Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative, which** strengthens national capacities for improved data integration and analysis for evidence-based decision-making and that adopts a match-making approach to building multi-dimensional partnerships to mobilize means of implementation and promote innovation in practices, technology, investment, policy and institutions, including for response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated impacts.
- Take note of the importance of the joint work of FAO and WHO and request to ensure that their respective food safety strategies are aligned and mutually supportive, following the **One Health approach** and taking into consideration the public health impact and global recession of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Endorse the **One Health approach**, including in the context of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, to foster healthy ecosystems (SDGs 12, 13) and healthy people and livelihoods (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10), recognizing the full range of linkages between biodiversity and all aspects of human health, and acknowledging it is important to integrate biodiversity, genetic resources conservation and breeding to address the common drivers of biodiversity loss, disease risk and ill health.
- Recognize the need to increase the focus on small and medium-sized cities in the implementation of the **Urban Food Agenda**, given their role in catalyzing the functional territorial dynamics in promoting sustainable agricultural transformation, while continuing to address challenges existing in larger cities, and to include the **Urban Food Agenda** in the lead up process towards the **2021 UN Food Systems Summit**.
- Welcome the comprehensive **COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme**⁵ launched by FAO to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while strengthening the long-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods, around seven key areas of action, including: Data for decision-making, Economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty, Trade and food safety standards, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, Preventing the next zoonotic pandemic, Boosting smallholder resilience for recovery, and food systems transformation, in line with the approach ‘building to transform’⁶ during response and recovery.
- Welcome the launch of the **Food Coalition**⁷ as a voluntary multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral alliance set up to support innovative initiatives to ensure global food access, and increase the resilience of agri-food systems and to strengthen the global response and concerted action to prevent the COVID-19 international health emergency from triggering a major world food crisis.
- Take note of the importance of **timely provision of data and information**, policy analysis and evidence-based recommendations to address the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on food security and nutrition, including in the context of the One Health approach.

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/partnerships/resource-partners/covid-19/en/>

⁶ UN Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition, June 2020 <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-impact-covid-19-food-security-and-nutrition>.

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/food-coalition/en/>

- Call upon the UN development system to **enhance work with partners** to provide expertise, data, analysis, innovation and technical support to countries to strengthen implementation of policy advice and to accelerate investments, with a strong monitoring and evaluation system in order to help countries ‘build back better’.
- Raise awareness among decision-makers about **the importance of biodiversity for food and agriculture for sustainable agriculture** and food production systems, livelihoods, food security and nutrition, and about developing or strengthening relevant policies.
- Recognize the **crucial role of markets and trade in contributing to healthy diets** and ending food insecurity and malnutrition in all of its forms, especially for the poor and vulnerable, including through the generation of employment and income.
- Recognize **the importance of trade** for contributing to the availability, accessibility and affordability of food, including nutritious food, as well as the stability of markets and the limitation of extreme food price volatility, and recalled and underlined the importance that, in line with the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and in keeping with their commitments under the WTO agreements.
- Acknowledge that there is ‘**no one size fits all**’ solution, highlighting the diverse contextual realities of national circumstances and the large diversity of food systems.
- **Recognize that food safety and plant and animal health** contribute to positive nutrition outcomes, and in particular highlight the work of Codex Alimentarius Commission and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in this regard.
- Highlight that **digitalization and innovation**, including technology to enhance productivity are important instruments for improving lives, livelihoods and incomes.
- Recall the importance of **south-south and triangular cooperation** as a complementary form of international solidarity and recognize the importance of evidence generation, knowledge-sharing and capacity development in this context.
- Recognize the **value of including indigenous peoples and local communities**, smallholders and family farmers in food value chains and in strategies to combat hunger and all forms of malnutrition.
- Stress the **importance to address youth, gender**, including rural and indigenous women as well as women in local communities, social inequalities, and poverty in the work on nutrition in the context of trade.