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Hand-in-Hand for Enhanced Delivery and Impact: Strengthening Partnerships in the Framework of Mutual Accountability to Achieve Results on the 2025 African Union Malabo Commitments and Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2

Executive Summary

The 2014 African Union (AU) Malabo Declaration,¹ adopted after ten years of implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), provides a new impetus to efforts to eradicate hunger and reduce poverty by urging member states to transform the agricultural sector for shared prosperity and improved livelihoods. The Declaration contains commitments that include, among others, enhancing investment finance in agriculture; ending hunger in Africa by 2025; reducing poverty through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation; boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services; enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other related risks; and strengthening mutual accountability to actions and results.

Both the Malabo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasize the need for robust partnerships that deliver means of implementation towards the achievement of the Goals. The Malabo Declaration, as part of the call for actions, urges development partners to rally and align their technical and financial support in a harmonized and coordinated manner to support the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration. The 2030 Agenda expresses determination to mobilize the necessary means of implementation through a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.

¹ African Union, 2014. Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/9661-assembly_au_dec_517_-_545_xxiii_e.pdf

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An evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative, FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative represents a bold step to eradicate poverty (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 1) and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2) by accelerating agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development. In so doing, the Hand-in-Hand Initiative contributes to the attainment of all the other SDGs. Using the most sophisticated tools available, including advanced geospatial modelling and analytics, Hand-in-Hand identifies opportunities to raise the incomes and reduce the inequities and vulnerabilities of the rural poor. The Hand-in-Hand Initiative prioritizes countries where national capacities and international support are most limited or where operational challenges, including natural or human-induced crises, are greatest. This is in keeping with the UN's commitment to "leave no one behind".

Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference

- Support the strengthening of national and regional institutional capacities for knowledge and data generation and management that support evidence-based planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Note that the commitments and targets of the Malabo Declaration are echoed in the SDGs, particularly SDG 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).
- Promote the fact that there are significant convergences among most of the indicators developed to measure progress in the implementation of the Malabo Declaration and the SDG indicators.
- Promote effective public and private partnerships as an important factor leading to achievement of results that transform lives and promote sustainable landscapes.
- Provide guidance on the importance of the underlying market-oriented, food systems approach to supporting agricultural, rural and food systems transformation as integral components of structural transformation to achieve national sustainable development objectives.

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I. Introduction

A. Regional and Global Commitments Converge on Ending Poverty and Hunger in Africa

1. At the global level, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which encompasses 17 SDGs, of which SDGs 1 and 2 are on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, and ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture by 2030. Mechanisms have been established to facilitate and support member states in the implementation as well as review and reporting of progress on the SDGs at both national and global levels. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, plays the central role in overseeing follow-up and review at global level. Indicators have been developed to assist this work, based on which Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) were prepared by a number of countries.
2. The commitment on strengthening mutual accountability seeks to mobilize stronger political will by African leaders and is channelled through a peer review mechanism for the effective leadership, stronger country ownership and partnership that ultimately drive sustainable agricultural growth and transformation. Member states engage in a biennial agricultural review process that involves tracking, monitoring and reporting on implementation progress but also fostering alignment, harmonization and coordination among multi-sectoral efforts and multi-

institutional platforms. It also aims to strengthen national and regional institutional capacities for knowledge and data generation and management that support evidence-based planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

3. The VNR reports serve to facilitate the sharing of experiences by member states, including successes, challenges and lessons learned in implementing the 2030 Agenda. These VNR reports also seek to strengthen policies and mobilize support and partnerships for the SDGs. The VNR reports have been focusing mostly on the efforts that governments are taking to incorporate the SDGs into their national strategies, budgets, public engagements, and coordination among different institutions.
4. It is important to note that the commitments and targets of the Malabo Declaration are echoed in the SDGs, particularly SDG 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture). Moreover, there are significant convergences among most of the indicators developed to measure progress in the implementation of the Malabo Declaration and the SDG indicators.
5. Furthermore, in different ways, all member states have been integrating Malabo commitments and SDGs into their national agricultural policy frameworks and reporting processes with the aim to have an integrated framework and set up common implementation mechanisms to deliver results. This is a key feature to rationalize the resources invested in these processes as well as reduce efforts made by countries to report on both frameworks. More important, both frameworks call for a country-owned and country-led review and evaluations based on high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated data. The challenge of generating such data has been acknowledged, but the need to intensify efforts to strengthen statistical capacities of member states has also been emphasized.

B. Slow Progress Toward Eradicating Hunger and Poverty in Africa

6. The AU has adopted a mutual accountability framework, which sets out principles for peer review, and a results framework to guide the tracking of performance indicators. Based on these frameworks, two subsequent biennial reviews were conducted in 2017 and 2019 to evaluate country performance in achieving the Malabo commitments. The results of those reviews were reported in two biennial review reports. The first, the “*Inaugural Biennial Review Report*”,² was presented to the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2018. The second Biennial Review Report³ was presented to the AU Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment in October 2019 in Addis Ababa and was presented to the AU Summit in February 2020.
7. Both the inaugural and second Biennial Review Reports indicate that, despite the efforts exerted and progress made by a few countries, several countries still faced challenges to get on track for achieving the Malabo commitments. For example, out of the 32 member states that had reported progress in the 2018 review report on undernourishment as part of the commitment to end hunger by 2025, only nine countries were on track for reducing the proportion of the undernourished population to 5 percent or less. Two years later, the second Biennial Review Report indicates that, out of the 33 member states reporting progress on this same indicator, only eight were on track, and stresses that undernourishment was still high (above 25 percent) in 14 member states.

² African Union, 2018. Inaugural Biennial Review Report of the African Union Commission on the Implementation of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. Highlights on Intra-African trade for agriculture commodities and services: risks and opportunities.

³ African Union, 2020. Second Biennial Review Report of the African Union Commission on the Implementation of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods: Highlights on Resilience and Livelihoods.

8. Ten member states had met the commitment to increase public investment in agriculture to at least 10 percent of annual public expenditures during the first review period (2015-2016). The figure for 2019, however, dropped to only four member states – less than one in ten countries – having met the minimum target. This statistic suggests a dramatic decline in the scores from the previous review period (which was 21.2 percent). This reversal (compared to the Inaugural Biennial Review Report) is also manifested in terms of performance against commitments on access of smallholder farmers to financial services, inputs and technologies, and women’s empowerment, among others. With only 12 countries having invested, over the reporting period, at least one percent of their agricultural GDP towards agricultural research and development, serious challenges exist in terms of leveraging opportunities for innovation and technology for transformation. Limited progress was also recorded in the areas of resilience and livelihood improvements, as only 11 out of the 49 reporting member states were on track. Furthermore, most countries could not maintain the progress registered during the earlier review period, raising legitimate concerns about the stability and sustainability of the progress achieved through current approaches. Only three countries have been able stay on track during both reporting periods, while 17 countries that were on track in 2017 were unable to maintain it in 2019. On the other hand, there has been encouraging progress on boosting intra-Africa trade in agriculture commodities, which is expected to further expand with the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
9. Such a deteriorating situation on progress on key indicators, particularly on poverty and hunger in Africa, is consistent with what obtains globally. The UN joint report on The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019⁴ indicates that hunger has been on the rise in Africa for three consecutive years with prevalence of undernourishment having reached levels of 22.8 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. The sub-Saharan region has also seen a steady increase in the number of undernourished people, reaching 256.1 million in 2018.

C. FAO’s Hand-in-Hand Initiative – Toward Effective Partnerships for Accelerated Actions and Greater Impact on Poverty and Hunger

10. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has recently launched the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, an evidence-based, country-owned and country-led initiative consistent with the principles enshrined in SDGs and the Malabo Declaration. The Hand-in-Hand Initiative prioritizes measures to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2) by accelerating agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development. In doing so, it contributes to the attainment of all the other SDGs (and in the case of Africa, the objectives of the Malabo Declaration). The initiative uses some of the most sophisticated tools currently available, including advanced geo-spatial modelling and analytics, to identify the best opportunities to raise the incomes and reduce the inequities and vulnerabilities of the rural populations who constitute the vast majority of the world’s poor. It uses these tools to provide a comprehensive view of full economic opportunities and to improve targeting and tailoring of policy interventions, innovation, finance and investment, and institutional reform accordingly. It thus prioritizes countries where national capacities and international support are most limited or where operational challenges, including natural or human-induced crises, are greatest. This is in keeping with the UN’s priority commitment to “leave no one behind”.
11. The Hand-in-Hand Initiative adopts a geographical, market-oriented food systems approach to increase the quantity, quality, diversity and accessibility of nutritious foods available in local, regional and national food markets. It works to strengthen food system capacities to deliver

⁴ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2019. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019. Safeguarding against economic slowdowns. Rome, FAO.

nutrition and healthy diets for everyone and improve household incomes to reduce extreme poverty. It ensures that UN norms and standards are fully reflected in policies that advance all three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. To this end, the Hand-in-Hand Initiative promotes the sustainable use of biodiversity, natural resources and ecosystem services, and supports climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience as well as other key objectives of the 2030 Agenda, including gender empowerment, youth employment and developing rural-urban linkages around sustainable food systems.

12. Data and advanced analytics underpin the Hand-in-Hand Initiative enabling governments and their investment partners to identify interactions and evaluate trade-offs among objectives and actions, helping to pinpoint key bottlenecks and opportunities for innovation, investment and institutional change. With a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, the Hand-in-Hand Initiative aims to deliver a first set of benchmark results by 2023, and aims to strengthen further the capacities of member countries to monitor progress and mutual learning, thus facilitating effective partnerships in support of countries' efforts towards achieving these goals.
13. The Hand-in-Hand Initiative seeks to strengthen existing international cooperation and fill the void where such cooperation is absent. Building on its country presence and goodwill, FAO convenes partnerships to deliver the necessary means of implementation, which means bringing in the international financial institutions, donors and technical partners to put technical and policy knowledge into action as well as attracting private-sector investment by providing information on areas of investment for development.