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COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

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Update on the FAO Strategy on Science and Innovation

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I. Background

1. The FAO Science and Innovation Strategy (the Strategy) was endorsed by the FAO Council at its 170th Session following an inclusive and transparent consultative process.¹ The Strategy is a tool to accelerate the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 (SF), and hence to contribute to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

2. The Strategy was developed with the participation of all Members through formal Governing Body sessions (including all Regional Conferences in 2022), as well as six informal consultations. The Strategy aims to bolster recent developments that have strengthened FAO's work on science and innovation by providing organization-wide guidance, coherence and alignment on science and innovation to strengthen FAO's capacities to better serve Members.

II. Relevance to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31

3. Science and innovation serve as a foundation for the SF and have cross-sectoral relevance across the Organization's programme of work. Innovation is considered a central driving force for achieving a world free from hunger and malnutrition. Innovation and technology are two of the four accelerators in the SF that speed up progress and maximize efforts in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and realizing the aspirations of the *four betters* (*better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*). At the same time, science underpins all four accelerators [technology, innovation, data and complements (governance, human capital and institutions)]. As such, science and innovation are integrated throughout the 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs),² the accelerators, crosscutting themes and regional initiatives.

III. Recommendations of the FAO Regional Conferences

4. The Regional Conferences welcomed the development of FAO's first-ever Science and Innovation Strategy as a key tool to contribute to the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, and underscored its cross-sectoral and cross-cutting relevance across the Organization's work.³ The transparent and inclusive consultation process through which it was developed was commended. The Regional Conferences highlighted that while science and innovation are critical for agrifood systems transformation, innovations needed to account for national circumstances and stressed the importance of considering the different contexts and priorities of Members in each region, including national and local specificities. They also stressed that science and innovation are powerful drivers for improving agrifood systems and that attention should be paid to under-represented groups, including small-scale producers, Indigenous Peoples, women and youth.

IV. Relevance to the work of the Committee on Forestry

5. Recent sessions of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) have highlighted the importance of science and innovation.⁴ Through its three pillars and nine outcomes, the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy responds to the Committee's related recommendations, requesting FAO to:

¹ Report of the 170th Session of the FAO Council (Rome, 13-17 June 2022), Appendix D.

<https://www.fao.org/3/nj485en/nj485en.pdf>

² FAO. 2021. Medium-Term Plan 2022-2025. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/ne576en/ne576en.pdf>

³ Reports of the Regional Conferences are available at <https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/en/>

⁴ Report of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry (<https://www.fao.org/3/ne205en/ne205en.pdf>), Report of the 24th Session of the Committee on Forestry (<https://www.fao.org/3/MX698EN/mx698en.pdf>), and Report of the 23rd Session of the Committee on Forestry (<https://www.fao.org/3/mr526e/mr526e.pdf>).

- a. identify and promote new technologies and digital innovation for data collection and dissemination on forest resources, their sustainable management and use – including livelihoods and socio-economic data - as well as on forest products;
 - b. contribute to a well-informed international dialogue and to evidence-based decision-making on forest and climate change mitigation and adaptation, through its work in capacity-building, forest health monitoring and knowledge-sharing initiatives;
 - c. include in the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture initiative issues related to the use of digital technology applications in land use planning, land use change and forestry, taking into account their impacts;
 - d. strengthen the contribution of the World Forestry Congress to establishing a more effective interface between science, policy, and investment in the forest sector;
 - e. support interested countries in strengthening efforts to collect more detailed information about the contribution of forests and trees outside forests to food security and nutrition, and to explore opportunities for increasing this contribution, including through the use of traditional knowledge;
 - f. support Members with the required tools and methodologies for generating better evidence of the contribution of forests to the conservation of biodiversity and strengthen countries' capacity to monitor biodiversity outcomes and address existing data gaps; and
 - g. support countries with a view to strengthening capacities in implementation and innovation in the private sector and smallholders and their organizations, including women's organizations, as appropriate.
6. In addition, the work of the Committee is rooted in science. The Strategy's focus on strengthening science- and evidence-based decision-making supports the Committee in performing its functions, and will provide opportunities for strengthening the science-policy interface.

V. Summary of main elements of the Strategy

Vision

7. A world free from hunger and malnutrition, where the potential of science and innovation is fully leveraged to overcome complex social, economic and environmental challenges of agrifood systems in a globally equitable, inclusive and sustainable manner.

Goal

8. Members harness science and innovation to realize context-specific and systemic solutions for MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Scope

9. The FAO Science and Innovation Strategy covers all sectors and areas of agrifood systems, including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture. The full range of scientific disciplines (e.g., the natural, social and economic sciences) are considered relevant, as well as sustainability science, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, to address systemic challenges in a holistic manner.

FAO recognizes the need for a diversity of innovations [technological (including digital), social, policy, financial and institutional] to contribute to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, including the knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples and small-scale producers.

Guiding principles

10. The Strategy is based on the following guiding principles: Rights-based and people-centered; Gender-equal; Evidence-based; Needs-driven; Sustainability-aligned; Risk-informed; and Ethics-based.

Pillars and outcomes

11. The Strategy focuses on three pillars:

- a. strengthening science and evidence-based decision-making;
- b. supporting innovation and technology at regional and country level; and,
- c. serving Members better by reinforcing FAO's capacities.

12. The pillars group together the nine outcomes of the Strategy. Action under the pillars will be catalysed by two crosscutting enablers: transformative partnerships and innovative funding and financing.

Accountability framework

13. Monitoring of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy will be fully aligned with the causal results chains and SDG targets established in the Strategic Framework 2022-31, ensuring that the Strategy supports the achievement of the SF's goals. The technology and innovation accelerators will be monitored through the relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPI), and activities under the PPAs will be measured through the most relevant SDG indicators. Reporting on the Strategy will take place in line with the established corporate reporting processes, including through the Mid-Term Review and Programme Implementation Report.