

175th Session of the Council

Item 7: Update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative

FAO appreciates the positive feedback of Costa Rica and the recognition of the increasing number of Members who have joined the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative. FAO further appreciates the feedback regarding the high value of the annual Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Forum which facilitates “negotiations with investors” in support of country as well as regional initiatives such as the Dry Corridor.

FAO recognizes the active role of Costa Rica in the Dry Corridor Regional HIH Initiative. Following the meeting with the World Bank’s Multiphase Programmatic Approach at the 38th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC 38), FAO will continue to support HIH member countries to engage with this programme through HIH, for their nationally and sub-regionally identified agrifood investments as presented in the Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Fora.

FAO also appreciates the strong engagement of Members such as Costa Rica and partnership with Central American Integration System (SICA) as a lead regional organization on the HIH Dry Corridor Initiative and we look forward to continuing this engagement for agrifood systems transformation.

With regard to the comments by New Zealand, FAO appreciates the recognition of the increased engagement of more member countries in HIH from the Southwest Pacific (SWP) as well as the acknowledgement of timely support of HIH to the SWP and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific subregion in particular. It appears that some of the SIDS have also been successful in engaging resources for the agrifood investments identified under HIH from a range of sources including the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF). The FAO Subregional Office in Samoa has been a strong partner in these engagements and the support of New Zealand would be useful for advancing those efforts.

FAO is pleased to advise that the Common Country Analysis (CCA) has been progressing well with recruitment of the needed expertise still ongoing in all five regions. A provisional shortlist of initial countries for CCA is currently being developed in close consultation with all the FAO Regional Offices and is expected to be discussed in the coming weeks. HIH will continue to engage with CCA and support the inclusion of HIH member countries for this valuable support, including those from the SWP.

FAO is also pleased to advise that the HIH team is working closely with the Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands to arrange a subregional training on Geospatial Information Systems for up to 25 participants from seven to eight countries, likely to be held in Fiji in November 2024. The specialized training will be tailored to subregional needs and FAO would welcome the support of countries such as New Zealand to arrange and deliver such an important human capacity development programme by our technical specialists from the Digital FAO and Agro-informatics Division (CSI).

FAO appreciates the positive feedback from the United States of America on the high responsiveness of HIH to FAO Members as well as for engaging with HIH member countries to have data at the forefront of FAO’s technical and policy assistance support.

FAO takes note of the two issues identified on missing links and is pleased to advise that these are being addressed and the existing Dashboard is updated. We are currently exploring how to include additional data on investments in the context of HIH in the new version of the HIH Dashboard and will provide regular updates as it moves forward.

FAO would be interested to explore engaging with the United States of America to support the ongoing enhancement of the current Dashboard to meet the increasing interest of all FAO Members.

With regard to the comments by Brazil, FAO appreciates the recognition of the increasing interest and number of HII member countries. FAO further notes the suggestion of including aggregated data on investments in the HII Dashboard. All HII investment notes from the Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Forums held to date are all available on the HII website. The HII team is currently exploring how to include additional data on HII-related investments in the new HII Dashboard, including at aggregate level as suggested, and will provide regular updates as this progresses.

FAO warmly welcomes the Government of the Philippines in joining the Hand-in-Hand Initiative as a “Hand-in-Hand Approach” country. Engagement with the Department of Agriculture is progressing, including the exchange of essential data for the development of HII typologies which will inform the development of prioritized agrifood investment cases in the Philippines.

As the HII process advances in the country, FAO looks forward to having the Government of the Philippines participate in the Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Forum, planned from 15 to 17 October 2024.

FAO welcomes the positive feedback from Australia and the recognition of both the increased number of HII member countries as well as the HII responsive efforts emphasizing climate smart investment development. FAO will continue these efforts as well as engagement to maximize potential partnerships in the Southwest Pacific region through FAO’s Subregional Office based in Samoa. The Office is actively engaged and supporting HII member countries in their agrifood investment efforts.

FAO further takes note of the appreciation and support expressed on data and reporting automation in the HII Dashboard and will continue our efforts to further enhance the user experience of the Dashboard, within the available resources. FAO warmly welcomes the engagement and support of the Government of Australia in the ongoing improvement of the Dashboard and related automation activities.

Finally, FAO is planning a series of briefings on the World Food Forum in the coming months which will include details on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Forum and some improved arrangements to facilitate engagements as well as the bilateral matchmaking sessions, led by HII member countries at the Forum.