

**Thematic Evaluation Series**

**Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Sustainable  
Development Goal 2 - "End hunger, achieve food  
security and improved nutrition and promote  
sustainable agriculture"**

**Phase 2**

**Annex 5. Study on FAO's role in the design of the SDGs**

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# 1. Introduction

1. On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 70/1 titled “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (United Nations A/RES/70/1) in which it endorsed the Post-2015 Development Agenda. World leaders representing 193 states had descended on New York to celebrate the UN’s 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary while endorsing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a series of 17 goals and 169 targets that had resulted from nearly three years of deliberation among Member States in consultation with international organizations, civil society, private sector and citizens at large. Hailed as “a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets” (ibid., p.3), UN Member States pledged to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and declared the eradication of poverty as the central global challenge within the sustainable development framework.
2. The process that gave rise to the SDGs was markedly different from the one that had led to the emergence of the MDGs. The MDGs were originally part of a donor-driven agenda with the intent to increase recipient countries’ accountability for delivered development assistance.<sup>1</sup> Unlike their top-down and non-transparent process, the SDGs were the outcome of extensive negotiations among UN Member States and were thus imbued with a level of legitimacy that the MDGs lacked initially. To gain that legitimacy, the 2030 Agenda had to sacrifice specificity, measurability and prioritization of goals. But this legitimacy came with the added advantage of universality and indivisibility of the goals, thereby applying to all nations across income and human development levels. Although Member States were the primary drivers of the 2030 Agenda, UN agencies, funds and programmes as well as a host of organizations, think tanks, foundations and civil society groups, among others, contributed to the discussions and tried to shape the formulation of the SDGs. One such entity was the world’s Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
3. This report examines the extent to which FAO may have contributed to the setting up of the 2030 Development Agenda, and argues that while UN Member States were clearly the drivers of the 2030 Agenda, they relied on the expertise provided to them by a host of institutions, including UN agencies, funds and programmes. While sitting in Rome, FAO was an active participant in the discussions and provided ample input into the debates held at the UN Open Working Group, and shaped the content of SDG 2 while contributing to the design of 21 indicators<sup>2</sup> interspersed throughout the 2030 Agenda.
4. Following this introduction, this report discusses research methodology. The next section introduces the initial process that gave rise to the establishment of institutions within the United Nations to start deliberations about the post-2015 Agenda. The following section examines the process and the various actors providing expertise and input into the deliberations around SDG 2. This part incorporates documentary evidence corroborated by testimonies received from officials involved in the process at the time, representing perspectives of those working inside and outside FAO. The last section concludes with findings on FAO’s contributions to the design of SDG 2.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, David Hulme, *The Millennium Development Goals: A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise*. Working paper no. 100 (2009), Manchester: Brooks World Poverty Institute. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, *Millennium Development Goals: Ideas, Interests and Influence*, New York: Routledge, 2017. Stephen Browne and Thomas G. Weiss (eds), *Post-2015 UN Development: Making change happen?* New York: Routledge, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> According to a document, titled “Tier Classification of SDG Indicators 22 May 2019” shared with the author by the Chief Statistician’s Office at FAO, these indicators include 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.a.1, 2.c.1, 5.a.1, 5.a.2, 6.4.1, 6.4.2, 12.3.1, 14.4.1, 14.6.1, 14.7.1, 14.b.1, , 15.1.1, 15.2.1, and 15.4.2.

## 2. Research methodology

5. This report primarily draws on qualitative methods, including the review of hundreds of documents – some relevant, others less so<sup>3</sup> – pertaining to the articulation of the post-2015 and later on the 2030 Agenda. In addition to a host of General Assembly Resolutions, the research examined documents emanating from the deliberations of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons; the UN Secretariat Open Working Group (OWG); FAO's official documents; and the UN archives. Some audiovisual sources related to the OWG were also consulted, although the primary focus was on written and official documents.
6. Based on these documents, a series of UN personnel were identified whose presence and direct involvement with the SDG process provided invaluable insights into FAO's contribution to the process and outcome of the post-2015 sustainable development negotiations. Initially, five professionals from within and outside FAO were purposefully selected and contacted, all of whom took the time to participate in a semi-structured interview via phone or Skype lasting between 30 to 60 minutes.<sup>4</sup> At the outset, interviewees were asked for permission to record the conversation, most of whom accepted. Interviewees were also asked for permission to be quoted in the report, some of whom wanted to see the report before giving permission. At the end of each interview, the question was posed for the interviewee to identify at least three people, who might have been able to add further information to the data collected. Through snowball sampling, the number of potential participants in the interview process increased to 30, half of whom took part in an interview between 21 June and 26 September 2019.<sup>5</sup> One advantage of these interviews was the provision of historical information and the incorporation of diverse experiences and interpretations in the analysis. One disadvantage was that the inputs, while invaluable to this research, provide indirect information that is ultimately filtered through the views of the interviewees. Nevertheless, the interviews were crucial to triangulating and corroborating other data sources examined for this report.
7. It needs to be noted that the timing of the research might have made it more difficult to reach out and connect with potential participants. As the interviews fell mostly on the latter part of July and all of August, the summer break may have impeded the possibility of interested parties to take part in this research. An effort was made to reach more people in the first week of September such that the final number of interviewees was 14 with written contributions from 2 other participants. All participants accepted to be listed and quoted in this report.

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<sup>3</sup> Only relevant documentation has been included in the references at the end of this document.

<sup>4</sup> For a list of interviewees, see Appendix 4.

<sup>5</sup> Participants in this study represented the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Food Policy Research Institute, World Health Organization, World Bank, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Society for International Development, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, and the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement.

### 3. Setting up the 2030 Agenda: the origins

8. In telling the story of how the SDGs were created, one often finds in the literature a juxtaposition to their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>6</sup> Originally, the Millennium Declaration introduced the core of the MDGs before they were sifted out and included in an Annex in the 2001 UN General Assembly's *The Roadmap Towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration*. (UN General Assembly A/56/326) The literature has aptly documented how the MDGs were the result of a top-down process, initially created by donors within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to harmonize aid and better coordinate their policies.<sup>7</sup> Later, they were endorsed by the international community within the confines of the Millennium Declaration and finally made actionable in the MDGs through an exclusive, technocratic process engaging various UN programmes, funds and agencies as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and OECD (Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and David Hulme).
9. The exclusionary process giving rise to the MDGs influenced the very different approach taken by the international community in creating the 2030 Development Agenda. In the outcome document of the 2010 MDG Summit, UN Member States requested from then Secretary-General, Ban ki-moon, to report on activities and consultations required to inform the intergovernmental debate on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. As a result, the Secretary-General established the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda in September 2011 to support the UN System's efforts in preparing the road to a post-MDG agenda. The Secretary-General nominated the UN Department of Economic and Social (DESA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to organize an Expert Group Meeting (EMG) to discuss lessons learned from the MDG agenda and deliberate what the best format for the post-2015 framework might be.
10. The EMG, composed of senior experts from over 50 UN institutions and international organizations,<sup>8</sup> met in February 2012 in New York to start the discussions that would provide inputs for Member States to ultimately draw up the final list of SDGs. Among the points raised at this three-day meeting were the agreement that sustainability needed to be brought into a development framework beyond 2015 and that broad consultations at the global, regional and national level should feed into the outcome (UNDG Expert Group Meeting, New York, NY, 27-29 February 2012). The UN was tasked with serving as a gatekeeper to prevent the post-2015 agenda from being overburdened with too many issues while safeguarding the inclusion of concrete goals, targets and indicators in the Sustainable Development Agenda.
11. As the international community was attending the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012, the EGM published its report *Realizing the Future We Want for*

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Kamau, Macharia, Pamela Chasek, and David O'Connor, *Transforming Multilateral Diplomacy: The Inside Story of the Sustainable Development Goals* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018); Stevens, Casey and Norichika Kanie, "The transformative potential of the Sustainable Development Goals," *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 16.3 (June 2016): pp. 393-396. Battersby, Jane, "MDGs to SDGs – new goals, same gaps: the continued absence of urban food security in the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda," *African Geographical Review* 36.1 (2017): pp. 115-129.

<sup>7</sup> See for example David Hulme, *The Millennium Development Goals: A Short History of the World's Biggest Promise*. Working paper no. 100 (2009), Manchester: Brooks World Poverty Institute. Elham Seyedsayamdost, "Development as End of Poverty: Reform or Reinvention," *Global Governance* 21.4 (Oct-Dec 2015): 515-535.

<sup>8</sup> For a list of the participating entities, see Appendix 1.

All recommending that the post-2015 Agenda rest on “the core values of human rights, equality and sustainability” with concrete goals and targets along “four key dimensions of a more holistic approach: (1) inclusive social development; (2) inclusive economic development; (3) environmental sustainability; and (4) peace and security.” The EGM further recommended that the post-2015 agenda should be guided by and fully aligned with the outcome document of Rio+20 while following a broad and inclusive consultation process with all relevant stakeholders. To do so, it recommended a roadmap based on a two-step approach: first, “to promote an open, inclusive and transparent consultation process, to take stock and encourage contributions from a wide range of stakeholders;” and two, “to intensify efforts to achieve intergovernmental consensus, while sustaining an open and inclusive process.” (Ibid.)

12. In fact, the mandate to develop a proposal on the SDGs was included in the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, in June 2012. In their resolution, UN Member States agreed on a series of institutional frameworks for achieving sustainable development. These included the importance of “an inclusive, transparent, strengthened, and effective multilateral system” (ibid) to address global challenges; the establishment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as “a principal body for policy review, policy dialogue, and recommendations on issues of economic and social development;” (ibid) and the creation of “a universal, intergovernmental, high-level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission.” (ibid). This latter institution would become key to the monitoring and reporting procedures envisioned in implementing the SDGs.
13. To initiate this process, the Rio+20 outcome document established several work streams to facilitate “an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process...open to all stakeholders.” (ibid). As a result, a series of parallel processes were introduced into the 2030 Agenda. Capturing those work streams demonstrates the highly participatory process that led to the SDGs.
14. One work stream constituted the High-Level Panel (HLP) of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, co-chaired by the Presidents of Indonesia and Liberia as well as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and including a 27-member advisory panel of leaders from civil society, private sector and other governments.<sup>9</sup> The HLP was set-up in July 2012 and tasked to advise on the framework of the post-2015 agenda while drawing on the experience with the Millennium Development Goals. The outcome of this group was the report *A New Global Partnership* published in May 2013, which drew on consultations of over 5 000 civil society groups and 250 CEOs of major corporations to put eradication of extreme poverty at the centre of the post-2015 goals while highlighting five transformative shifts in approach. These included:
  - i. Leave no one behind
  - ii. Put sustainable development at the core
  - iii. Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth
  - iv. Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all
  - v. Form a new global partnership
15. The Open Working Group (OWG) of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals was the main organ of deliberation; it included 30 members based on a constituency-based system of representation in which the seats were shared by several countries, thus

<sup>9</sup> For a list of the HLP Advisory Panel, see Appendix 2.

enabling 70 states to be directly represented in the deliberations. The OWG met 13 times between March 2013 and July 2014. The first eight sessions constituted the stocktaking phase from March 2013 to February 2014 and were dedicated to thematic deliberations, including session three on food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, drought and desertification, land degradation, water and sanitation; and session eight on oceans and seas, forests, biodiversity, among others. The final five sessions served for the designing of the SDGs culminating in the submission of a 'zero draft' proposal containing the 17 goals in July 2014.

16. To provide an opportunity for academia and research entities to engage in the process, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) was created under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General Ban ki-moon in 2012, led by Jeffrey Sachs and drawing on the work of stakeholders in business, civil society, and international organizations. The SDSN submitted its report *An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development* to the Secretary-General in September 2013 and listed ten priority challenges to be addressed in the framework of the post-2015 agenda. These included:
  - i. End extreme poverty and hunger
  - ii. Achieve development and prosperity for all without ruining the environment
  - iii. Ensure learning for all children and youth
  - iv. Achieve gender equality and reduce inequalities
  - v. Achieve health and wellbeing at all ages
  - vi. Increase agricultural production in an environmentally sustainable manner, to achieve food security and rural prosperity
  - vii. Make cities productive and environmentally sustainable
  - viii. Curb human-induced climate change with sustainable energy
  - ix. Protect ecosystems and ensure sound management of natural resources
  - x. Improve governance and align business behaviour with all the goals
17. In addition to all these work streams and in order to enhance an inclusive process, global, regional, and national consultations were held at all these levels. At the regional level, the five UN Regional Commissions<sup>10</sup> held a series of consultations to provide a regional perspective into the post-2015 agenda. Their report, titled *A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda* (UN, 2013) highlighted four key messages emphasizing the importance of employment generation, inequality, environmental sustainability, and democratic governance in the post-2015 agenda. At the same time, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) initiated a series of consultations at the national and global levels. The national consultations were held in over 60 countries both online and offline. Their aim was to incorporate feedback from citizens across the world through an SDG action campaign called "My World"<sup>11</sup> that asked citizens to rank the six most important priorities to them. Over five million votes were cast by 2015 and the results of the survey were shared with the High-Level Panel.
18. Last but not least, the United Nations Global Compact ensured that the views of the private sector were incorporated into the post-2015 process. Their deliberations culminated in a White Paper titled *The Role of Business and Finance in Supporting the Post-2015 Agenda* and highlighted the importance of corporate responsibility in advancing sustainable

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<sup>10</sup> These include the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Eastern Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

<sup>11</sup> For more information, see <http://about.myworld2030.org>.

development (United Nations Global Compact, 2014). The report was presented to the Secretary-General in July 2014. The inclusion of businesses in the post-2015 process is an interesting part of the legitimization experience with the SDGs, as growing consensus emerged that the resources required to implement the goals globally could not be offered by donors and states alone but required the engagement of the corporate sector.

19. As the above work streams indicate, in contrast to their predecessors, the SDG design process enjoyed broad transparency, inclusion and participation by a plethora of stakeholders. While Member States were clearly in the driver's seat, they called on expertise from UN agencies, funds and programmes along with civil society, academia and businesses in order to decide on the final list of goals and targets. FAO was among the UN agencies actively and pro-actively engaged in the deliberations, providing expertise and input, and identifying targets and indicators to be included in the SDGs. The following section examines the process and outcomes.

## 4. Deliberations on food security and nutrition

20. Before analysing FAO's contribution, a preface is in order. As various documents and archival evidence suggest, the UN Secretary-General Ban ki-moon had already, since 2008 "strongly championed food and nutrition security" and perceived that "the UN's communication surrounding food and agriculture, nutrition and hunger has reflected the complex nature of these issues, at the expense of a clear message or advocacy platform." (David Nabarro, 2012) This was particularly the case because of the soaring food prices in 2008 due to the confluence of a series of dynamics, including increasing oil prices, a rapidly growing population in need of more food, and decline in agricultural investment, among others. In response to the global food crisis, in April 2008, the United Nations System Chief Executive Board (CEB) established a High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on Global Food and Nutrition Security.<sup>12</sup> Under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General and vice-chairmanship of the FAO Director-General, the HLTF convened the heads of UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes, parts of the UN Secretariat, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the World Trade Organization.<sup>13</sup> The main objective of this task force was "to promote a comprehensive and unified response to the challenge of achieving global food security, including by facilitating the creation of a prioritized plan of action and coordinate its implementation."<sup>14</sup> The HLTF adopted a Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) in that same year detailing a two-track action plan that distinguished between short-term outcomes responding to immediate needs and long-term outcomes required for sustainable food systems.
21. The food crisis clearly emphasized the importance of food and nutrition security and planted it on the top of the Secretary-General's agenda. In early 2009, the Secretary General along with the Spanish Prime Minister at the time, Rodriguez Zapatero, convened the High-Level Meeting on Food Security for All in Madrid, leading to consensus by participants that resources needed to be scaled up and better coordinated.<sup>15</sup> A year later, a consultation process was launched to receive input from stakeholders in order to update the 2008 CFA, culminating in the publication of an updated Comprehensive Framework for Action that accounted for all the dimensions of food security and changes in context. In a letter dated 16 June 2010, the Secretary General wrote as chair of the HLTF that "[F]ood and nutrition insecurity continues to be one of my main priorities." (letter by UN Secretary-General to all UN Resident Coordinators and all Country Representatives of the High-Level Task Force to encourage synergized action on food security, 16 June 2010) In the aftermath of Rio+20, and with the food crisis seemingly over, the HLTF then refocused its activities on Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge and developed joint positions around the following five elements (UN):

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<sup>12</sup> This body was originally called the HLTF on the Global Food Crisis and seems to have been changed into Global Food and Nutrition after Rio+20 when the food crisis was deemed to be over and the HLTF refocused its activities on advancing the SG's Zero Hunger Challenge. See

<https://www.un.org/en/issues/food/taskforce/establishing.shtml>, accessed September 1, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> For a list of the members of the HLTF on Global Food and Nutrition Security, see Appendix 3.

<sup>14</sup> See Establishing the HLTF in 2008 at <https://www.un.org/en/issues/food/taskforce/establishing.shtml>, accessed September 1, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> See International Institute for Sustainable Development, SDG Knowledge Hub, <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/madrid-high-level-meeting-on-food-security-for-all-calls-for-exploring-options-for-a-global-partnership-for-agriculture-and-food-security/>, accessed on September 1, 2019.

- i. Zero stunted children less than 2
  - ii. 100% access to adequate food all year round
  - iii. All food systems are sustainable
  - iv. 100% increase in smallholder productivity and income
  - v. Food Loss and Waste
22. The launching of the Zero Hunger Challenge is indeed crucial to the way in which SDG 2 was shaped. In a letter dated 29 May 2012, David Nabarro, at the time Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for food security and nutrition as well as the Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN), referenced Member States' "general consensus that food security and nutrition are essential elements for success in Rio and for future discussions of sustainable development." (EOSG, 2012) In the same letter, Nabarro stressed, "[C]areful consultation with FAO, IFAD and WFP plus selected Member States and other stakeholders has revealed a strong appetite for the Secretary-General to issue a 'Zero Hunger Challenge'." (ibid.) Attached to that correspondence was a copy of the Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge, in which Ban ki-moon asserted,

*"I have been inspired by the bold work by government, civil society, business and scientists in Brazil to end hunger among their people. We are lucky that one of the architects of that work, Jose Graziano da Silva, has joined the UN family and is now head of the Food and Agriculture Organization."*

(EOSG, 2012)

23. This is to argue that by the time the various processes outlined below – including FAO's internal deliberations, the Rome-based Agencies' (RBAs) positioning, and the OWG discussions – were underway, the Secretary-General had already created a context in which the importance of food and nutrition security had been highlighted, and agencies, in particular FAO were aware of the high priority assigned to this topic. In fact, there are a variety of letters exchanged between the then Director-General of FAO, Jose Graziano da Silva, and the Secretary-General corresponding on the centrality of food and nutrition security and the kinds of initiatives FAO intended to undertake to make the organization "fit for purpose."<sup>16</sup>
24. In this context, and in order to assess the extent of FAO's contributions to the design of the SDGs, the following analysis identifies two phases. The first phase started in September 2011 when the United Nations Secretary-General established the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, co-chaired by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the mandate to consult with all stakeholders and support the preparations for the 2030 Agenda. This phase essentially finished in July 2014 when the Open Working Group finalized its 18-months long deliberations and submitted its 17 Sustainable Development Goals to the UNGA. The second phase started in late 2015 after the SDGs had been launched at the UNGA Summit in September of that year and is still ongoing. This phase has witnessed the engagement of a series of UN agencies in the identification and selection of pertinent indicators for specific targets. As this assessment indicates, FAO has played a crucial role in both phases contributing to the process as well as the outcomes associated with the SDGs.

<sup>16</sup> For example, letter ES-DG/10/1166 from FAO Director-General to UN Secretary-General, 5 October 2010; letter DG/14/105 from FAO Director-General to UN Secretary-General, 30 September 2014, and letter ESD-DG/15/924 from FAO Director-General to UN Secretary-General, 4 November 2015.

25. Officials and experts inside and outside FAO agreed on this Organization's crucial role in the formulation of SDG 2 and others. However, there were different views on the final outcome, its feasibility and its implementation at the national level. Some, for example, argued that the SDGs were too sectoral and instilled the silo fragmentation that one commonly finds in global governance. This, they argued, was evident in the separation of issues according to institutional mandates rather than integration and interlinkages of policies.<sup>17</sup> Others disputed that the agenda was sectoral as it was about people, planet, prosperity and peace.<sup>18</sup> And yet others argued that in fact there were many interlinkages among the Sustainable Development Goals and that a number of studies illustrated the complex net of connections between targets and goals.<sup>19</sup> These studies highlight the importance of the interactions across SDG domains, and provide a starting point for policymakers and other stakeholders to set their priorities and implementation strategies, as well as to support more coherent and effective decision-making, and monitoring of progress.<sup>20</sup> David Nabarro presented a different point of view arguing that "the way in which global governance is organized is sectoral" and that "interdisciplinary and intersectoral thought and action" would always be frustrated by the global governance architecture.<sup>21</sup>

### **Phase 1: Design of the Sustainable Development Goals (2011-2014)**

26. Starting in September 2011, when the UN Secretary-General tasked UN DESA and UNDP to create an interagency team to deliberate about a post-2015 development agenda, FAO began to participate in the process leading to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Already, in the outcome document of the Expert Group Meeting, FAO had introduced terms that would later on find a place in the Agenda, including references to sustainable food and nutrition security, access to nutritious food, sustainable food production and consumption, and food and sustainable agriculture, among others. And most importantly, in that report, the interdependencies between the various global challenges were highlighted in the connections drawn between different human development factors (UN, 2012). In terms of process, FAO initiated a series of internal discussions; contributed to a series of platforms in cooperation with the other two Rome-based Agencies, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), to forge a common position; and participated in the OWG to provide input and expertise on not only food security, nutrition, and sustainable

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<sup>17</sup> A proponent of this viewpoint was Stefano Prato, Managing Director of Society for International Development, in interview with author, 5 September 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Eve Crowley, Deputy Regional Director, FAO in Chile, was a proponent of this point of view; in interview with author, 26 September 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Dorian Navarro and Pietro Gennari presented this perspective, in interview with author, 6 September 2019.

<sup>20</sup> See David Le Blanc, "Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets," DESA Working Paper No. 141 ST/ESA/2015/DWP/141, March 2015; IAEG-SDG Expert Working Group, *Interlinkages of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, October 2018; International Council for Science, *A Guide to SDG Interactions: From Science to Implementation*, May 2017; United Nations SDG Toolkit, *A Nexus Approach for the SDGs: Interlinkages between the goals and targets*; Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, *Sustainable Development Goals Interlinkages and Network Analysis: A practical tool for SDG integration and policy coherence*, July 2017.

<sup>21</sup> David Nabarro, interview with author, 9 August 2019.

agriculture, but also oceans and seas, forests and biodiversity.<sup>22</sup> In terms of outcome, FAO's efforts culminated in the creation of a stand-alone goal on hunger, although there seemed to be quite a momentum to take that route (SDG 2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture). In addition, FAO actively worked on the incorporation of a series of targets and indicators related to food, nutrition and agriculture as well as in other SDGs, including SDG 1, 5, 6, 12, 14 and 15. Furthermore, FAO has been serving as a custodian agency for a variety of SDG indicators while partnering with other UN System agencies on SDGs with elements of food systems inherent to them.

### **FAO's internal deliberations**

27. To begin, early on, FAO had a series of internal deliberations about the post-2015 agenda and the Organization's potential input into that process. As such, a team was set-up in the second half of 2012, after the finalization of the Rio+20 summit. According to various FAO sources, the team was in full gear in early 2013 before the deliberations of the OWG had started.<sup>23</sup> Under the coordination of Anna Rappazzo, the team consisted of a communications officer, Richard Allen, and a statistician, Dorian Navarro. This team operated under the leadership of the Organization's SDG focal point, Eve Crowley at the time, and the overarching leadership of Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Director-General of Economic and Social Development at FAO. The primary aim of this team was to position FAO's areas of interest in the emerging post-2015 agenda, resulting in the emergence of 14 thematic areas including food security and the right to food; nutrition; poverty eradication; resilience; social protection; climate change; ecosystem services, biodiversity, genetic resources; energy; fisheries, aquaculture, oceans and seas; forests and mountains; land and soils; sustainable agriculture; tenure rights; and water (FAO, 2014). FAO held broad consultations internally and conducted an institutional workshop to discuss and develop the themes and issues that should be highlighted in each area.<sup>24</sup> Once these themes had crystalized out of the internal consultations of FAO, "issue papers" were prepared and disseminated in various media and shared with stakeholders. The brochures in turn served as the basis for FAO's engagement in the post-2015 agenda, including their contributions to the Open Working Group.
28. There is strong evidence for FAO's early engagement and substantial contributions to the SDGs both in terms of the formulation of targets as well as the indicators. At the same time, all sources indicate that Member States were the main drivers of the agenda and that international organizations or others could not shape the language. However, deliberations in various fora engaging the UN agencies influenced the OWG, whether in the form of distribution of brochures that illustrated the internal thinking of FAO or through Member States relaying discussions held with FAO to their counterparts in New York. Specific examples of this are provided below in discussing RBA's work on indicators. Seemingly, FAO had put in the necessary legwork to identify its priority targets and used its various networks to position itself from an early stage. The fact that its Assistant Director-General

<sup>22</sup> According to FAO's website on SDGs, "FAO's contribution began at the 3<sup>rd</sup> OWG in May 2013 when the Organization co-led interagency issues briefs on sustainable agriculture (with IFAD) and food security and nutrition (with WFP and IFAD). At the 8<sup>th</sup> OWG in February 2014, FAO co-led issues briefs on oceans and seas, forests and biodiversity (with UNEP)." See <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/overview/open-working-group-on-sustainable-development-goals/en/>, accessed 25 August 2019. However, based on the various documents reviewed and interviews conducted, the preparations for these contributions started in 2012 and indicate an early engagement by FAO in the post-2015 process.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Clark, Eve Crowley, Dorian Navarro, and Rob Vos, interview with author.

<sup>24</sup> Dorian Navarro (Programme Adviser, Office of the Chief Statistician, FAO) interview with author, 6 September 2019.

were wired into communities working on the different target areas lends further credence to FAO's ability to provide input into the SDG design process.

29. David Nabarro argued that "the combination of Ban ki-moon as a thoughtful and skilful political actor and the people at FAO, including Graziano" was key to the kind of formulation witnessed within the SDGs. While having the right people in the right place at the right time is part and parcel of the success of FAO in contributing to the 2030 agenda, Nabarro highlighted the importance of having process and substance converge around the right issues and asserted that FAO is an organization "that has the richest encyclopaedic understanding of systems and it's full of really powerful agronomists and economists and people with expertise in fisheries and forests and all kinds of food – it's a brilliant place, and what Graziano did because of his role as a minister in Lula's government was to help link that knowledge base to the political context."<sup>25</sup>
30. A claim iterated during the course of this study intimated that FAO's 14 thematic areas had been shared with the OWG and may have served as a first draft for the SDGs. However, while personal agency occasionally played a role as elaborated below, documentary evidence, archival research and various interviews indicate that it would be erroneous to assign too much influence to one single individual or one single document. Various accounts confirm that the OWG co-chairs had access to the 14 thematic areas, but the programme of the OWG also indicates that the sessions were organized around other areas not included in FAO's 14 thematic areas, including employment and decent work for all; education and culture; health and population dynamics; sustained and inclusive economic growth; infrastructure development and industrialization; human rights, the right to development, global governance; promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment; as well as conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance, to mention most but not all areas covered in the discussions held over the course of the first eight sessions of the OWG. Based on existing evidence, FAO's thematic areas were this organization's means of contributing to the broader discussions surrounding the post-2015 agenda.
31. A tension that emerged early on within FAO was the question of whether or not to have a standalone goal on hunger. On the one hand, some in FAO, including Assistant Director-General Jomo Sundaram, opposed the creation of a separate goal on hunger arguing that the focus on hunger within MDGs was thanks to its inclusion in MDG1 on poverty. In fact, Sundaram believed in the importance of keeping the poverty-hunger link to such an extent that he participated in the second session of the Open Working Group on 19 April 2013 to give a presentation to Member States making the case for keeping hunger as part of the poverty eradication goal (Jomo Sundaram, 2013).
32. On the other hand, some in FAO leadership, including the Director-General, Jose Graziano da Silva, followed the Secretary-General's lead in light of the launch of his "Zero Hunger Challenge" and pushed for a separate goal on hunger. For the proponents, having a separate goal on hunger was not only a boost to the importance of the topic in the global agenda but also a means of highlighting the interlinkages between nutrition, food security and sustainable agriculture. This being said, FAO was not the only player advocating for a stand-alone hunger goal. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of nutrition and food security, a variety of UN agencies as well as civil society groups from nutrition to agriculture to socio-economic issues supported the creation of SDG 2 (Ibid.).

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<sup>25</sup> David Nabarro, interview with author, 9 August 2019.

33. Interestingly, while institutionally it was in FAO's advantage to have a separate goal on hunger, several interviewees expressed FAO's concerns regarding the "Zero Hunger" abbreviation of the goal, which was politically an important message, but did not align well with the goal in its entirety, which included nutrition and sustainable agriculture.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the centrality of nutrition to the food and hunger agenda deserves further examination and draws our attention to the Rome-based Agencies and their input into the 2030 Agenda.

### **FAO's contribution to common platforms**

34. While internal deliberations were key to FAO's ability to establish its priority areas and get a head-start on the SDGs, externally it engaged in planning and implementing a series of partnerships and platforms, which solidified its stance on a variety of issues pertinent to the SDGs. These fora included the RBA interagency working group on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum); the Committee on World Food Security (CFS); and the second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2). Each of these will be analysed in turn.

### **The role of RBAs**

35. Early on in 2013, FAO established with the Rome-based Agencies – WFP) and IFAD – an interagency working group on the post-2015 Development Agenda. The aim of this group was to have a common position on food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, which they could easily communicate to Member States. As such, the RBAs jointly contributed to publication of issue briefs and statistical papers on those topics, thereby informing the work of the Open Working Group both during the stock-taking phase as well as during the drafting of the sustainable development goals. Various documents and archival records indicate RBA collaboration around the post-2015 agenda, especially in terms of knowledge and expertise provided to Member States.<sup>27</sup> These documents indicate that FAO, IFAD and WFP were working closely to establish a common position on food, nutrition and agriculture. They also contributed to the framing of the agenda. The sentiment relayed by various FAO officials was one of satisfaction about the extent to which they were able to contribute to the design of SDG 2 in particular, especially in cooperation with the RBAs, but also a host of other SDGs including SDG 12, 14 and 15. As various accounts confirmed, the RBA meetings and the support generated among the agencies helped FAO to push for the food systems perspective, which turned out to be fundamental to FAO's operations. Evidence indicates that FAO was not only pushing the envelope in terms of the targets and indicators to be included in the 2030 Agenda but also in terms of the discourse. An example given was the discourse around food systems, which was highlighted in one of FAO's Flagship Reports, *The 2013 State of Food Insecurity in the World*. Although at the time FAO was the first and only UN agency talking about food systems, in 2019 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) put out their food systems strategy for children and adolescents, and World Health Organizations (WHO) is now also on board.<sup>28</sup>
36. The constructive relations among the heads of the three RBAs were indeed highlighted in a variety of instances and is worth mentioning. Agencies are led and staffed by people, and varying constellations of individuals can have different effects – in this instance, the

<sup>26</sup> See Dorian Navarro and Pietro Gennari, interview with author, 6 September 2019.

<sup>27</sup> See for example, FAO, IFAD and WFP, *Post 2015 Development Agenda: Rome-based Agencies Targets and Indicators*, Rome, March 2014, accessed on 18 August 2019, [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/post-2015/Targets\\_and\\_indicators\\_RBA\\_joint\\_proposal.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/post-2015/Targets_and_indicators_RBA_joint_proposal.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> See for example, FAO and WHO, *The Nutrition Challenge: Food System Solutions*, 2018, <https://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/policies/nutrition-challenge-food-system-solution/en/>

configurations seem to have worked in favour of these agencies and their objectives. In the words of David Nabarro, “we had extremely close and constructive relations with heads of not only the 3 RBAs but also the CGIAR System<sup>29</sup> and other parts of the UN family.”<sup>30</sup> This collaboration was also highlighted in various news sources when the UNGA resolution on SDGs was released on 10 September 2014. In one case, FAO noted the report was “testimony to the strong collaboration among the RBAs, especially for Goal 2, and to FAO’s dynamic collaboration with the membership in Rome, country capitals and New York, with other UN entities, as well as with other non-state actors, which fostered a deep sense of mutual trust and cooperation.” (FAO, 2014)

37. In the aftermath of the launch of the SDGs, the RBAs produced a paper outlining their collaboration to deliver the 2030 Agenda while focusing on “the agencies’ respective mandates, related comparative advantages and distinctive strengths.” (FAO, 2016) The report confirms that the RBAs “played a pivotal role in supporting Member States as they shaped the 2030 Agenda, and substantively contributed to its contents...identified and prioritized indicators for SDG 2.” (Ibid.) More importantly, this report asserts, “Member States recognized the major role of the RBAs in setting SDG 2.” (Ibid.) Thus, it seems that the RBAs were successful in both creating a common position and in presenting that position to Member States. This is also in line with testimonies from a variety of actors involved in the process of identifying indicators after the launch of the SDGs and will be elaborated further below.

### **Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition**

38. One of the FAO initiatives leading to the formulation of the SDGs included the launch of an e-Consultation on the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum). Housed within FAO, the FSN Forum strives to be a neutral mediator between the various partners and stakeholders with the objective of eradicating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. As such, it comes as no surprise that FAO used this forum along with WFP to organize an online consultation on “Hunger, Food and Nutrition Security” from 19 November 2012 to 10 January 2013. Open to all stakeholders, including governments, civil society groups, international organizations, academia and the private sector, the consultation reached 172 countries and retrieved 275 comments from around the world. The aim was to “help identify the actions, goals, targets and indicators needed to achieve food and nutrition security, and the eradication of hunger, in a post-2015 world.” (FSN Forum, 2013) The contributions were synthesized and the outcome ultimately fed into the High-Level Consultation (HLC) on Hunger, Food Security and Nutrition, co-organized by FAO and WFP and co-hosted by the Governments of Colombia and Spain in Madrid in April 2013. Existing evidence highlights the importance of this forum as it became a venue for different stakeholders – from governments to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to UN agencies – to vocalize their views and to contribute to the formulation of SDG 2. Even the official position of some Member States, including Australia and the European Union, were expressed in the FSN Forum.<sup>31</sup>
39. The High-Level Consultation in Madrid was an important contributor to the deliberations around food and nutrition, as the merits of having a standalone goal on food and nutrition were highlighted. As the chairs argued, “Although achievement of food security and

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<sup>29</sup> Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research is a global partnership that brings together international organizations working towards a food secured future, see <https://www.cgiar.org>

<sup>30</sup> David Nabarro, interview with author, 9 August 2019. Also see interviews with Michael Clark and Mark Smulders.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Smulders, interview with author, 9 July 2019.

optimal nutrition is enhanced through efforts to eradicate poverty, both outcomes merit attention in their own rights as part of a new, universal post-2015 agenda.” (FAO and WFP, 2013) Importantly, the HLC’s report focused attention on the multidimensionality of food, highlighting sustainable and resilient food production and consumption; access to better quality, diverse and nutritious foods; efficient food distribution systems; reduced waste and loss; efficient use of natural resources including water, energy, land, soils, air, oceans, forests and biodiversity; and small producers and their organizations. As this report indicates, at this point, a shift was occurring from viewing food in terms of hunger to food both in terms of quantity and quality as well as its connection to agricultural sustainability and impact on the global commons and ecosystems.

### **Committee on World Food Security**

40. FAO housed the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which had undergone significant reform in light of the 2008/2009 world food crisis. The CFS was seen as not having been sufficiently active and involved to predict the food crisis and as such was heavily criticized. Originally set-up in 1974 as an intergovernmental body to serve the Member States of the UN System in food security policy, CFS became a UN body to report both to the FAO conference and to the ECOSOC/UNGA. The reform process in 2009 made FAO, IFAD and WFP equal funders of the CFS while broadening its membership to include other stakeholders pertinent to the global debate on food security, including civil society and private sector actors. In that light, the CFS is considered “the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together to ensure food security and nutrition for all.”<sup>32</sup>
41. Various participants emphasized the importance of CFS as a platform for FAO to convene meetings and debate the formulation of SDG 2. It was also a venue in which the shift in discourse around nutrition took place, as CFS members discussed obesity and overweight, while deliberating about the kinds of targets that could be included in the 2030 Agenda (Francesco Branca, 2019). The reform of CFS and the expansion of its membership facilitated the transition of this UN institution into a key mechanism in the formulation of SDG 2. Some partially attributed the transition of CFS towards more integrated action to FAO’s hosting and sponsorship of the CFS.<sup>33</sup> The CFS High-Level Panel of Experts, on the other hand, served in different settings and helped in cementing the concept of food systems, which was ultimately taken up by the Open Working Group in their final formulation of the SDGs.<sup>34</sup>
42. Indeed, various CFS reports indicate that this Committee was influential at a very particular time of the formulation of the SDGs. For example, the Committee’s 39<sup>th</sup> session, which was held in Rome in October 2012, specifically discussed food systems, not only in relation to nutrition but also in relation to climate change, small-scale producers, food loss and waste, agricultural investment, and production and consumption broadly (CFS, 2012). In addition, the CFS HLPE hosted a range of consultations around questions linking food and nutrition to food systems, and intimating the emerging shift in discourse around nutrition.<sup>35</sup> Thus, CFS not only helped in crystalizing the shift in discourse on nutrition but also effectively

<sup>32</sup> See FAO website on Committee on World Food Security at <http://www.fao.org/cfs>, accessed on 9 September 2019.

<sup>33</sup> See for example, David Nabarro, interview with author, 9 August 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Clark, interview with author, 1 July 2019.

<sup>35</sup> See for example, *HLPE Consultation on the V0 draft of the Report: Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems*, December 23, 2013 to January 31, 2014, [fao.org/fsnforum/cfs-hlpe/discussions/food-losses-waste-v0](http://fao.org/fsnforum/cfs-hlpe/discussions/food-losses-waste-v0).

translated this shift into the 2030 Agenda. Key in that process was the second International Conference on Nutrition.

### **Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)**

43. The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) took place at FAO headquarters in Rome in November 2014 and was jointly organized by FAO and WHO in cooperation with the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, IFAD, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF, World Bank and WTO. This was an intergovernmental convening that brought together national policymakers in health and agriculture, among others, while including international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, research institutes and the private sector. As stated in its outcome document, *Rome Declaration on Nutrition*, the aim of the Conference was “to address the multiple challenges of malnutrition in all its forms and identify opportunities for tackling them in the next decades.” (FAO and WHO, 2014)
44. Reading closely through this document, three key ideas stand out, which are later on found in the 2030 Agenda. First, the Rome Declaration spoke about “malnutrition in all its forms, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity,” (Ibid.) thereby showing the shift from looking at malnutrition in terms of wasting and hunger only to viewing it from the perspective of access to nutritious food generally. It’s important to note that WHO had been contributing to this debate since the 2000s with its awareness raising campaigns around obesity and related non-communicable diseases. Second, ICN2 highlighted the prevalence of malnutrition in all countries stating, “different forms of malnutrition co-exist within most countries; while dietary risk affects all socio-economic groups, large inequalities exist in nutritional status, exposure to risk and adequacy of dietary energy and nutrient intake, between and within countries.” (Ibid.) This way, ICN2 emphasized the universality of malnutrition and its existence everywhere around the world. And third, the concept of food systems was highlighted in the Rome Declaration, focusing not only on production and consumption but also on food trade and transportation, food loss and waste, resource scarcity and environmental sustainability.
45. All of these concepts found their way into the SDGs. The preparatory work that went into ICN2 started in October 2013 so that many of the issues were defined and discussed ahead of the actual conference. As Member States were key participants in this process, the ideas shared in ICN2 percolated into the Open Working Group and helped shape the SDGs as we know them today. ICN2 participants saw the reframing of the nutrition question taking shape during the preparatory period and spilling into the event itself. Nutrition was formulated in terms of all forms of malnutrition, thus expanding the earlier emphasis on undernutrition to include micronutrient deficiencies, obesity, overweight and other diet-related diseases.<sup>36</sup>
46. Examining the SDGs, in particular SDG 2 more closely, one recognizes the influence of ICN2, and therefore the influence exerted by FAO and WHO in the formulation of targets, such as 2.1 on ending hunger and ensuring access to safe and nutritious food; 2.2 on ending all forms of malnutrition; and 2.4 on ensuring sustainable food production systems. Additionally, ICN2 impacted the definition and identification of indicators, including indicators on stunting and body mass index (BMI). FAO pushed for other indicators, especially diet quality indicators, which ultimately were not taken up by Member States

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<sup>36</sup> Anna Lartey, interview with author, 4 September 2019; Stefano Prato, interview with author, 5 September 2019; Ellen Piwoz, interview with author, 6 September 2019.

because of the difficulties associated with dietary diversity indicators.<sup>37</sup> However, the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators has been meeting regularly to revise the indicators; thus, it is possible that indicators such as the minimum dietary diversity score might be included in the list of indicators in the 2020 comprehensive review.

### **FAO's contribution to the Open Working Group**

47. There is no doubt that the process at the OWG was steered by Member States. In fact, scanning the 13 OWG sessions, one finds dozens of Member States' interventions at any one session while only a handful of international organizations were given the floor to comment. Nevertheless, it appears that FAO very strategically used its interventions and issue briefs to substantively contribute to the debate. Thus, the various internal deliberations, group discussions, conferences and consultations examined above fed into the Open Working Group.
48. As mentioned earlier, FAO's Assistant Director-General Jomo Sundaram, gave a presentation entitled *Poverty Eradication: Why Hunger Link?* to the OWG at its second session on 19 April 2013. While this contribution did not necessarily feed into the 2030 Agenda, as Member States ultimately decided to have a separate goal on hunger, it shows the early engagement of FAO in Member States' deliberations. In fact, the third OWG session in May 2013 was dedicated to topics at the heart of FAO's work, including food security and nutrition; sustainable agriculture; desertification, land degradation and drought; and water and sanitation. There were two keynote speakers at this session, one of whom was FAO Deputy Director-General for Natural Resources, Maria Helena Semedo, and the other was the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Michel Jarraud. Speaking on behalf of the FAO Director-General, Jose Graziano da Silva, Semedo referenced FAO's collaboration with IFAD and WFP, the Global Thematic Consultation in Madrid, and the support by IFAD, CGIAR and many other stakeholders, including civil society, private sector and Member States. Promoting the centrality of eradication of hunger and poverty to the Sustainable Development Goals, Semedo emphasized the support the Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge had garnered and listed its five pillars. Those five pillars included:
- i. 100% access to adequate food all year round (2.1)
  - ii. No more stunted children under two years of age (2.2)
  - iii. All food systems are sustainable (2.4)
  - iv. 100% increase in smallholder farmer productivity and incomes (2.3)
  - v. Minimizing food loss and waste of food (12.3)
49. While the first four pillars of the Zero Hunger Challenge translated into targets under SDG 2, the fifth on food loss and waste was tucked in SDG 12 under responsible consumption and production. Target 12.3 aims to "halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses" by 2030. There are two possible explanations as to why food loss and waste was included in SDG 12. First, the target addresses the whole value chain from the farm to the consumer and as such falls more squarely into sustainable production and consumptions. Second, there has been increasing evidence for the strong link between reduction of food loss and waste, and environmental sustainability such that it appears to

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<sup>37</sup> Anna Lartey, interview with author, 4 September 2019.

make sense to include it in a goal that more directly addresses the link between agricultural production and reduction of our environmental footprint.<sup>38</sup>

50. In addition, Semedo argued that resilience in agriculture and food systems needed to be increased and to do that, she suggested, "The key lies in building healthy and dynamic ecosystems that are more resilient to stresses, and better able to cope with – and respond to – climate change, extreme weather events, emerging diseases, shifts in population patterns and economic disruptions and shocks." Of the five interdependent clusters that she listed, four of them are found among various SDG targets including land degradation and desertification (Goal 15), water resource management and protection of forests, aquatic and mountain ecosystems (Goals 6 and 15), energy efficiency (Goal 7) and biodiversity (Goal 15). Thus, already by May 2013, FAO had identified the interconnected thematic areas pertinent to its work streams that would be key to the 2030 Agenda and used the opportunities offered to incorporate those into the design of the SDGs.
51. The OWG co-chairs' summary of the third session, for example, indicates that at the time it was not yet clear whether the topics covered would be covered by "one, two or three goals;" (OWG 3, 2013) however, they highlighted the interdependency among food, land and water as well as upcoming topics on health, energy, climate change and biodiversity. The chairs made reference to sustainable agriculture and food systems, smallholders, access to land and credit, food loss and waste, as well as fisheries and their management. As such, the variety of initiatives undertaken prior to the OWG sessions fed into the deliberations while the keynote crystalized some of those deliberations and most likely provided Member States with the more specific targets that are included in SDG 2.
52. Yet, FAO's contribution was not only in the realm of food and hunger. In fact, there is strong evidence that FAO contributed to deliberations around other SDGs as well. This is particularly clear in the statement prepared by FAO's Forestry Assistant Director-General, Eduardo Rojas-Briaies, for the eighth session of the OWG on 4 February 2014. Noting that FAO is primarily known for its work to end hunger and food insecurity, the Assistant Director-General added that FAO also worked on "oceans, biodiversity, forests and mountains," and that a sustainable management of these resources was key to overcoming food insecurity, rural poverty and environmental degradation (UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2014). Indeed, as the office of the Chief Statistician at FAO demonstrated, the goals pertaining to this Organization's areas of work cover not only SDG 2 but also SDGs 6, 12, 14 and 15.

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<sup>38</sup> Many thanks to Pietro Gennari and Michael Clark for their explanations on this point received via email on 29 October 2019 and 12 November 2019, respectively.

**Phase 2: Launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (since September 2015)**

53. With the launch of the SDGs on 25 September 2015 at the UN Secretariat in New York, FAO's imprint on the Agenda was not only visible in the separate goal on hunger, food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, but also in a series of targets that fell under FAO's mandate and areas of work, including water resource management, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources as well as terrestrial ecosystems including forests, land, soils and biodiversity. However, as Lawrence Haddad, the chair of the Global Nutrition Report, rightly pointed out, "the real action behind the 17 goals is the 230+ indicators – the SDGs themselves are communication devices, the accountability is based on the progress towards the indicators."<sup>39</sup>
54. As it turns out, FAO also occupied an important position with regards to the formulation of the SDG indicators. Towards the end of 2015, FAO upgraded the profile of the Chief Statistician and subsequently created a dedicated Office of the Chief Statistician led by Pietro Gennari. Perhaps even more importantly, FAO was selected as chair of the Committee for the Coordination of the Chief Statisticians of the UN system tasked with the process of identifying the global SDG indicators. The Committee had the significant though difficult job of reducing the long list of over 1 200 indicators proposed by Member States in the open consultation process while improving the metadata documentation. Coordinating the technical discussions around the SDG indicators provided FAO with a leadership role, which helped to incorporate a series of indicators proposed by the Organization.
55. Regarding SDG 2, FAO developed a joint proposal with the Rome-based Agencies in order to have a stronger voice in the global discussion. As is all too familiar to anyone working on interagency strategies, the process of deriving a consolidated proposal among the RBAs was not an easy task, as each agency had their own preferred indicators they pushed for. FAO also came up with their own indicator proposal for the 14 thematic areas they had originally identified. The first collection of indicators submitted to the UN Statistical Commission included over 300 indicators, which needed to be further trimmed down.<sup>40</sup> To do that, the Committee assigned the SDGs to different groups and reduced the number based on data accessibility and methodological development. The idea was to ensure that the proposed list would have both Member States' support and strong methodological foundation. This list was influential in getting the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators to agree to a reduced list of 232 unique indicators after intensive consultations; although the total number of the indicators is 244, as some of them are listed under more than one target.
56. Hence, looking at the indicators, FAO's contribution is very clear. Various FAO officials identified the selection of the food insecurity experience scale (FIES) as an important win, especially as other agencies were pushing for their own indicators to measure the prevalence of food insecurity. Based on different accounts, FIES was taken up thanks to FAO's earlier partnership with Gallup, which had allowed testing this indicator in 147

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<sup>39</sup> Lawrence Haddad (Executive Director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition), interview with author, 22 August 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Pietro Gennari's detailed explanation of this process was crucial to this part of the report. This process was first explained in an interview with author on 6 September 2019, and later on further elaborated through written input on 19 September 2019.

countries over a period of three years.<sup>41</sup> Although not every country had adopted FIES, enough methodological work and background documentation existed for Member States to be convinced of the utility of this particular indicator, which was ultimately taken up under SDG 2. Further, in addition to being a custodian agency to the majority of the SDG 2 indicators, FAO also assumed responsibility for two indicators on access to land with specific emphasis on gender disparities; two indicators on water use efficiency and sustainability as a key resource for agricultural activity; and one indicator on food loss and waste for Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production.

57. Moreover, FAO's contribution to the indicators reached across the agenda, demonstrating both the interconnectedness of the SDGs as well as the importance of food and nutrition not only to hunger and poverty, but also in terms of access to and sustainable management of natural resources. Thus, FAO contributed four indicators relating to the use of oceans and marine resources for Goal 14 including an indicator on contribution of sustainable fisheries to the gross domestic product (GDP), especially geared toward small island states for which fishery is an important source of income. Goal 15 also received contributions from FAO on sustainable management of forests and mountains. In addition to the 21 indicators, for which it serves as a custodian agency, FAO is also a partner agency for another 5 indicators interspersed throughout the SDGs. This was in fact a point of pride for FAO Director-General, Jose Graziano da Silva, who often reminded his staff that FAO was the custodian of one of the highest number of SDG indicators.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Anna Lartey, interview with author, 4 September 2019. Pietro Gennari, in e-mail communication, 19 September 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Anna Lartey, interview with author, 4 September 2019.

## 5. Conclusions

58. As this study has demonstrated, FAO was an active and proactive participant in the framing of the SDGs. Not only did it kickstart its own internal deliberations early on, but it also participated in a variety of convenings while planning and leading consultations to feed into the design of the SDGs. Its imprint is visible in the existence of a standalone goal on hunger (although this was already prefigured in the Zero Hunger Challenge launched by the Secretary-General after the 2008 food price crisis), in its formulation of a series of SDG targets, in serving as a custodian agency for 21 indicators, and in its partnership with other agencies in monitoring a series of other indicators. There is strong evidence for the background work that went into positioning FAO to have maximum influence on the 2030 Agenda. However, there were also a series of coincidental appointments and proactive institutional initiatives that catalysed FAO's engagement.
59. First, the timely appointment of Jomo Sundaram to Assistant Director-General for Social and Economic Development brought to FAO a highly experienced and knowledgeable person who had been involved in the Post-2015 Expert Group Meeting in New York, attended all the negotiations in Rio+20, knew how the UN in New York worked, and was well connected with the co-chairs of the Open Working Group. There was also the appointment of Jose Graziano da Silva to head FAO in mid-2011, as discussions about a post-2015 agenda were taking shape. Bringing with him the experience from Brazil's *Fome Zero* (Da Silva, 2019) while the Secretary-General was championing the Zero Hunger Challenge inspired by *Fome Zero*, gave additional legitimacy to FAO's institutional experience and knowledge. The appointment of Michael Clark to work on governance issues under Jomo's leadership added to the political skills required to distribute knowledge about FAO's work within different fora. In addition, there were all the various Assistant Director-Generals and their technical staff who were deeply connected to global partnerships on water, oceans, mountains, forests and soils, and were able to harness those networks for greater engagement in the 2030 Agenda. Finally, the appointment of FAO Chief Statistician, Pietro Gennari, as the chair of the UN System Chief Statisticians gave FAO a leading role in the discussions that led to the short-listing and final selection of the global indicators.
60. Of course, FAO did a lot of legwork to ensure that it had a voice in the design of the SDGs. It created a small but very efficient team that engaged in the discussions by creating the thematic areas and also establishing consultations with the RBAs to have a common position. Speaking with one voice gave these organizations a much stronger platform than other agencies might have had. In addition, the reformed Committee on World Food Security enabled FAO to directly engage in the collection and analysis of data and perspectives and build on them to shape the agenda. Further, by co-organizing with WFP the High-Level Consultation on Hunger, Food Security and Nutrition in Madrid, FAO collaborated with partners and found a platform in which to both absorb stakeholders' perspectives while influencing the narrative and outcome of that document. Similarly, by co-organizing with WHO and hosting the second International Conference on Nutrition in Rome, FAO not only deeply engaged and deliberated in various fora on food security and nutrition, but also effectively participated in shifting the discourse on nutrition and translating that shift into the design of the Sustainable Development Goals.

61. A Mark Twain adage goes, “the harder I work, the luckier I get.”<sup>43</sup> It certainly seems that FAO’s significant contribution to the design of the SDGs – while supported by a series of lucky circumstances – was grounded in timely and strategic preparations as well as hard work.

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<sup>43</sup> Many thanks to Michael Clark for sharing this apt adage in interview with author, 1 July 2019.

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## **Appendix 1. Participating entities in UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA as Co-Chair)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP as Co-Chair)  
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)  
Department of Public Information (DPI)  
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)  
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)  
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)  
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)  
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)  
Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG)  
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)  
Global Environment Facility (GEF)  
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
International Maritime Organization (IMO)  
International Monetary Fund (IMF)  
International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)  
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)  
Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)  
Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (ODSG)  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS)  
Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA)  
Peace-building Support Office (PBSO)  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)  
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women)  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)  
United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP)  
United Nations Global Compact Office  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)  
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)  
United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)  
United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)  
United Nations Millennium Campaign  
United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)  
United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)  
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)  
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)  
United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination Secretariat (CEB)  
United Nations University (UNU)  
United Nations Volunteers (UNV)  
United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)  
Universal Postal Union (UPU)  
World Bank  
World Food Programme (WFP)  
World Health Organization (WHO)  
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)  
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)  
World Trade Organization (WTO)

## **Appendix 2. Members of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia (Co-Chair)

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia (Co-Chair)

Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom (Co-Chair)

Amina J. Mohammed (Ex Officio)

Gisela Alonso (Cuba)

Fulbert Amoussouga Gero (Benin)

Abhijit Banerjee (India)

Gunilla Carlsson (Sweden)

Patricia Espinosa (Mexico)

Maria Angela Holguin (Colombia)

Naoto Kan (Japan)

Tawakkol Karman (Yemen)

Sung-Hwan Kim (Republic of Korea)

Horst Kohler (Germany)

Graça Machel (Mozambique)

Betty Maina (Kenya)

Elvira Nabiullina (Russian Federation)

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria)

Andris Piebalgs (Latvia)

Emilia Pires (Timor-Leste)

John Podesta (United States of America)

Paul Polman (Netherlands)

Queen Rania of Jordan

Jean-Michel Severino (France)

Izabella Teixeira (Brazil)

Kadir Topbas (Turkey)

Yingfan Wang (China)

## Appendix 3. Participating entities in the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food and Nutrition Security<sup>44</sup>

<b>Entity</b>	<b>Name of Principal</b>
UN Secretary-General	Mr Ban Ki-moon, HLTF Chair
FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization	Mr Jose Graziano da Silva, V. Chair
DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Mr Hongbo Wu
DPA, Department of Political Affairs	Mr Jeffrey Feltman
DPI, Department of Public Information	Ms Cristina Gallach
DPKO, Department of Peacekeeping Operations	Mr Hervé Ladsous
IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development	Mr Kanayo Felix Nwanze
ILO, International Labour Organization	Mr Guy Ryder
IMF, International Monetary Fund	Ms Christine Lagarde
OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Mr Stephen O'Brien
OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development	Mr Angel Gurria
OHCHR, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	Mr Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein
OHRLS, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	Mr Gyan Chandra Acharya
OSAA, Office of Special Adviser on Africa	Mr Maged Abdelaziz
UNCTAD, UN Conference on Trade and Development	Mr Mukisa Kituyi
UNDP, UN Development Programme	Ms Helen Clark
UNEP, UN Environmental Programme	Mr Achim Steiner
UNHCR, UN High Commissioner for Refugees	Mr Antonio Guterres
UNICEF, UN Children's Fund	Mr Antony Lake
UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Mr Li Yong
World Bank	Mr Jim Yong Kim
WFP, World Food Programme	Ms Ertharin Cousin
WHO, World Health Organization	Ms Margaret Chan
WTO, World Trade Organization	Mr Roberto Azevêdo
Office of the Special Adviser to the SG on the MDGs	Jeffrey Sachs
Office of the SRSG on Food Security and Nutrition	David Nabarro
Coordinator	Giuseppe Fantozzi

<sup>44</sup> Source: UN website on the HLTF at <https://www.un.org/en/issues/food/taskforce/updatedmembership.shtml>.

## Appendix 4. Participants for this study

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation at the time</b>
Max Blanck	Moderator, FSN Forum, FAO
Francesco Branca	Director, Department of Nutrition for Health and Development WHO
Michael Clark	Director, Governance and Policy Support, FAO
Eve Crowley	Deputy Regional Director, Chile, FAO
Pietro Gennari	Chief Statistician, FAO
Lawrence Haddad	Chair, Global Nutrition Report
Anna Lartey	Director of Nutrition, FAO
David Nabarro	Special Representative of UN Secretary-General for Food Security and Nutrition and Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN)
Dorian Navarro	Junior Consultant, Task Team on Post-2015 Development Agenda and Programme Adviser, Office of the Chief Statistician, FAO
Ellen Piwoz	Senior Programme Officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Stefano Prato	Managing Director, Society for International Development
Mark Smulders	Senior Economist, Agricultural Development Economics Division FAO
Jomo Kwame Sundaram	Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, UN DESA Assistant Director General and Coordinator, Economic and Social Development Division, FAO
Jos Verbeek	Senior Advisor for the 2030 Development Agenda, World Bank
Rob Vos	Director of Development and Policy Analysis, UN DESA Director, Agricultural Development Economics Division, FAO
Patrick Webb	Alexander McFarlane Professor of Nutrition, Tuft University