



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Innovation Portfolio Sense–Making



## WHY

Innovation is essential for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to achieve its goals of eradicating hunger, ensuring food security, and promoting sustainable agrifood systems across the globe, leaving no one behind.

Applying the Portfolio Sense–Making methodology provides a deeper understanding of innovation within FAO's program of work and its strategic significance. It allows FAO to strategically align and manage projects and resources, fosters learning across initiatives, and ensures the support needed to enhance innovation portfolios and impactful scaling for long–term goals.



## WHAT

A systematic approach to optimize and align innovation processes, resources, and partnerships to achieve organizational objectives.

## KEY PRINCIPLES

- Alignment with FAO's strategic goals
- Data-driven decision–making
- Inclusivity in stakeholder engagement
- Transparency in the process and outcomes
- Portfolio approach for broader and longer–term impact



## Populate the inventory

Start by the defining scope, then collect the relevant portfolio items (for example, projects, programmes, normative work, etc.) to create an inventory, and select criteria that fit strategic considerations.



## Build a baseline portfolio

The next step is to identify innovations within the portfolio items, organize and categorize them. This provides an initial overview of your portfolio.



## Assess portfolio items

Now, it's time to assess and rate portfolio items based on their scaling stage and other selected criteria (for example, evidence for solution impact, risk, etc.).



# INNOVATION PORTFOLIO SENSE-MAKING

## Gauge portfolio performance

This step involves participatory workshops with relevant stakeholders to analyze data, identify trends and gaps, and begin to discuss options to optimize the innovation portfolio.



## STEPS



## Evolve innovation portfolio

At this step, adjustments to enhance the innovation portfolio are discussed, including recommendations to revise existing portfolio items, propose new ones, or phase out items not aligned with the organization's strategic priorities.



## Reflection and validation

Finally, review and validation of the innovation portfolio and recommended changes to enhance it. This involves reflecting on the portfolio sense-making process and outcomes and defining next steps towards implementing proposed changes.



