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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Thirty-sixth Session

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Results for FAO in the region – 2020-21

Executive Summary

1. This document presents major developments and principal results achieved in Asia and the Pacific region during the biennium 2020-21. It also highlights FAO's new ways of working, modalities and initiatives introduced in 2020-21 to contribute to supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind.

Following the 35th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific held in 2020, FAO focused its work in the region through the following Regional Initiatives:

- a. Regional Initiative 1: Zero Hunger through promotion of sustainable transformation of food and agriculture systems to end poverty and malnutrition.
- b. Regional Initiative 2: Climate change and enhancement of sustainable management and use of natural resources.
- c. Regional Initiative 3: One Health and control of transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases.
- d. Interregional Initiative on SIDS Pacific component on food security, nutrition and climate resilience.

These Regional Initiatives served as a mechanism for delivery at country level, facilitating greater impact of FAO's work on the key priorities in the region under the results framework for the biennium as presented in the *Updated Results Framework 2020-21*.

While COVID-19 affected many aspects of delivery during the biennium, FAO demonstrated its commitment to stay and deliver the field programme in the region. During 2020-21, FAO delivered over 500 projects and adapted them to local conditions and the pandemic, employing online implementation methods as appropriate, totalling USD 294 million of support to Members. Moreover,

FAO developed 237 new Trust Fund projects, mobilizing USD 313.6 million in new extra-budgetary resources for the region, as well as 169 new Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCPs) valued at USD 35.2 million. Of these, over 100 projects delivered life-saving emergency, humanitarian and resilience support valued at USD 130.2 million, including 47 new projects focused on supporting Members' COVID-19 response and recovery.

Regrettably, two countries in the region (Afghanistan and Myanmar) faced unprecedented crises in 2021, leading to a rapid increase of acute food insecurity. In Afghanistan acute food insecurity is now affecting 22.8 million people, equivalent to more than half of the population; FAO has rapidly scaled up its operation reaching nearly 3 million people in 2021.

Field programme delivery during the biennium was underpinned and informed by the development of a wealth of knowledge products: 77 books and 500 other printed and electronic (web-based) products; 106 video and animation products; and thousands of social messages.

In addition, during the biennium, a number of key corporate initiatives were introduced, such as the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative, the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, the 1 000 Digital Villages Initiatives, the One Country One Priority Product, all of which will continue to be implemented during 2022-23 and beyond.

During the biennium, FAO together with Members also identified remaining gaps and lessons in achieving the SDGs, which served as the basis in preparing the new set of Regional Priorities.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to:

- a. Recognize the major actions carried out by FAO and the results achieved by FAO responding to the main priorities identified by the 35th Session of the Regional Conference.
- b. Recognize the delivery and outcomes of FAO's work in the region, particularly in light of the unforeseen and unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.
- c. Acknowledge the importance of continued delivery of normative and knowledge products and services, such as regulations, voluntary guidelines, legal instruments, and studies at national and regional levels, and policy dialogue based on evidence.
- d. Note the transformational change and modernization of the Organization since 2019, the key corporate initiatives introduced, and the full alignment of FAO's country-level planning process and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, building on UN development system repositioning efforts to collectively support country ownership and address national SDG priorities and gaps.

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Introduction

2. This document presents major developments and principal results achieved in the Asia and Pacific region during the biennium 2020-21. It also highlights FAO's new ways of working, modalities and initiatives introduced in 2020-21 to contribute to supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind.

3. Since the arrival of Director-General QU Dongyu in August 2019, FAO has undergone deep transformative actions to ensure that the Organization is fit-for-purpose to face the challenges that lie ahead. FAO has introduced a modular and flexible structure that allows for optimal cross-sectoral collaboration and aims for a stronger and coordinated focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among the changes introduced: the new Office of Innovation to consolidate and strengthen FAO's innovative spirit; the new Office of SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs¹ to ensure that the special needs of these vulnerable populations and countries are met; the new Office of SDGs, which coordinates the corporate engagement in the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review; and FAO's new position of Chief Scientist, which ensures robustness, breadth and independence of scientific approaches in FAO's work.

4. The reforms introduced also aim at modernizing FAO and improving its methods of work and transparency, including through the establishment of the Core Leadership team, comprised of the three Deputy Directors-Generals, the Chief Economist, the Chief Scientist and the Director of Cabinet.

5. In 2020-21, FAO rapidly transitioned to a fully digital Organization, further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the expanded use of cloud solutions and the introduction of new technologies facilitating the work of the Organization from any location and paving the way for the "new normal". Virtual meetings of the Governing Bodies, including the Regional Conferences in 2020, allowed governance processes to proceed smoothly, with interpretation provided in all FAO languages.

6. Furthermore, during the biennium, a number of key corporate initiatives were introduced, such as the *Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative*, which is FAO's evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development in support of the SDGs, and the *COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme*, which calls for immediate-, medium- and longer-term actions to prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis.

7. In 2020-21, FAO fully aligned its country-level planning with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) process, thus building on the UN Development System (UNDS) efforts to collectively support country ownership and address national SDG priorities and gaps. FAO's country-level process contributes to shaping the formulation of the UNSDCF, thus ensuring that agrifood system transformation concerns and related SDGs are well integrated and prioritized in the UN common planning documents. In countries with ongoing humanitarian crises, FAO as co-lead of the Food Security Cluster actively contributed to the formulation of the country Humanitarian Response Plans.

8. Following the 35th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific held in 2020, FAO focused its work in the region through the following Regional Initiatives:

- a. Regional Initiative 1: Zero Hunger through promotion of sustainable transformation of food and agriculture systems to end poverty and malnutrition.
- b. Regional Initiative 2: Climate change and enhancement of sustainable management and use of natural resources.
- c. Regional Initiative 3: One Health and control of transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases.

¹ Small Island Developing States (SIDS); Least developed countries (LDCs); Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)

- d. Interregional Initiative on SIDS Pacific component on food security, nutrition and climate resilience.

9. These Regional Initiatives served as a mechanism for delivery at country level, facilitating greater impact of FAO's work on the key priorities in the region under the results framework for the biennium as presented in the *Updated Results Framework 2020-21*.

10. The next section describes achievements in Asia and the Pacific region in 2020-21, focusing on corporate and regional priorities in the context of FAO's work. The section also highlights relevant cross-cutting themes and thematic areas important for ensuring the quality and integrity of FAO's work.

Achievements in the Region

FAO's new ways of working – modalities and programmes

11. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a new normal to FAO's way of working and demanded even more effective delivery of work through streamlined planning and increased delegation of authority. The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) has increased accountability for results by adopting results-based management.

12. The pandemic also intensified the impetus for the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which have been instrumental in moving towards One FAO. RAP has shared and exchanged information with other regions on global priorities including the COVID-19 response, resilient agrifood systems and the HIH Initiative. The recent highlight was the SIDS Solutions Forum, which convened participants from around the globe. FAO helped Members to learn from other country experiences with ICTs, which demonstrated huge potential to help achieve the SDGs.

13. Under the key principle of "Stay and Deliver", FAO continued to execute its role and remain present in crisis/humanitarian contexts in countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar to help rural people who suffer the most from crises through providing humanitarian assistance. Preliminary reporting from country offices indicates that FAO reached more than 3.8 million people with direct emergency and resilience assistance in countries affected by disaster and humanitarian crises in the region in 2021.

Hand-in-Hand Initiative

14. FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative strives to facilitate agrifood systems transformation and sustainable rural development accelerated through targeting the poorest and the hungry, differentiating territories and strategies and bringing together all relevant dimensions through analysis and partnerships. Launched in July 2020, FAO's Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform is a digital public good to facilitate partnerships, and provide advanced geo-spatial modelling and analytics, to identify real-time gaps and opportunities to raise the incomes and reduce the inequities and vulnerabilities of rural populations.

15. The HIH Initiative in the region made considerable advancements during 2020-21 towards spurring larger and more ambitious efforts to promote and sustain inclusive and collective action for rural development through agricultural transformation. The Initiative was officially launched in more than half of the priority countries in the region (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu). Substantial work has been undertaken to inventory available data and work towards integrating existing statistical information and data sets with FAO's corporate platform, as well as to build initial inventories of donor interventions in a number of HIH Initiative priority countries. At least five Members, supported by FAO HIH Initiative task forces, have completed (or are near to completing) the necessary technical studies and have agreed upon programme entry points, value chains, territories and markets, as well as required investments. Most have begun preliminary partner consultations. The processes and analysis under the Initiative are supporting Members to strengthen and accelerate existing programmes or develop ambitious new ones, build national capabilities, and strengthen national ownership of the sustainable development process around the achievement of SDG 1, 2 and 10 in the countries.

SIDS Solutions Forum

16. FAO organized the two-day SIDS Solutions Forum in 2021, in collaboration with the Government of Fiji and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The theme of the Forum was “COVID-19 impacts on the economy and the potential of digitalization and innovation to accelerate progress on resilient agrifood systems; improved nutrition and health; and strengthened climate resilience adaptation within the context of achieving the SDGs”. FAO developed the SIDS Solutions Platform, which aims to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and the SIDS Accelerated Modality of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. It also facilitates the sharing of information and experiences of good practices and solutions. Along with speakers who gathered for the event, about 1 600 people from around the world watched via video-streaming. Notable attendees included nine heads of state/government and 22 ministers from SIDS (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Cook Islands, Fiji, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Timor-Leste and Tonga), China and Ireland, the President of the UN General Assembly, the Alliance of Small Island States, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, other UN and regional agencies, and international financing institutions.

1 000 Digital Villages Initiative

17. FAO's 1 000 Digital Villages Initiative aims to convert 1 000 villages across the world into digital hubs - with the aim of supporting the transformation of agrifood systems, as well as supporting existing and potential digital villages in their quest to advance and improve livelihoods, agriculture, nutrition, health and well-being of their citizens. The Initiative incorporates three main elements: "e-Agriculture" to improve agricultural productivity through ICT and digital solutions, such as climate smart, precision and intelligent facility agriculture; "Digital Farmer Services" to enhance farmers' access to services, including financial services, social protection and employment; and digital services for "Rural transformation".

18. Digitalization is leaping forward across most sectors in the region, and COVID-19 made it an urgent and utmost priority in the area of food and agriculture as well as rural livelihoods. FAO has placed digitalization and innovations among the top priorities throughout its work programme. Asia and the Pacific are among the regions with the greatest momentum towards large-scale and broad-based digital innovations across the board. FAO support for countries to develop, implement and enact digital agricultural strategies and their applications within specific areas has been accelerating and expanding. FAO launched the 1 000 Digital Villages Initiative and started to develop up to ten country strategies (Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam) to integrate digital village models within their rural digitalization initiatives, with about 100 digital village pilots. FAO also documented several successful cases of digital agriculture being implemented in the region from the most advanced to LDCs across the region.

One Country One Priority Product (OCOP)

19. In September 2021, FAO launched its *Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products: One Country One Priority Product (OCOP)* aiming at developing sustainable value chains for Special Agricultural Products, support small and family farmers reap the full benefits of a global market, and ultimately help the transformation of current agrifood systems and the achievement of the SDGs.

20. The region started implementing this initiative in September 2021. Based on rich experiences in the region, FAO organized a stocktaking with Cambodia, India, Nepal, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam and developed a working partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which has ample experiences in developing this initiative in the region. FAO also developed a regional platform on OCOP in coordination with governments, research partners and various stakeholders. Currently, FAO is developing a number of prototypes and will pilot this initiative in Southeast Asia (Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand), South Asia (Bhutan and Sri Lanka) and the Pacific (Fiji and Solomon Islands).

Notable partnerships, innovations and cross-cutting themes

Partnerships

21. FAO strengthened partnerships in the region and formalized new agreements with the Asian Institute of Technology and others to improve Members' access to expertise from leading academic institutes in Asia. FAO convened several high-level regional dialogues bringing a wide range of partners from ministries, development partners, donors, international financing organizations, civil society organizations, and Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) research institutions. The dialogues addressed critical priorities such as COVID-19 recovery efforts (with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN) and the legislative enabling environment to achieve food security and nutrition (with parliamentarians). Viewing the private sector as a key ally to bring technology, innovation and financial resources into the fight against hunger and malnutrition and to achieve the SDGs, private sector consultation was integrated with the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) processes. For example, FAO formalized its partnership with Grow Asia, a network with more than 580 partners, to cultivate more inclusive, sustainable and resilient food systems in Asia and the Pacific, including by strengthening partnerships with small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In the region, FAO formalized five new Memoranda of Understanding with civil society organizations and research partners and three Letters of Intent with private sector entities, covering diverse thematic areas including livelihoods, technology and innovation, food safety and nutrition, and water sustainability. FAO currently has informal engagements with over 120 private sector entities in Asia and the Pacific region, through technical collaboration, project support, policy dialogues and consultations, a large share of which focus on strengthening agribusiness, animal health and food safety.

Innovations and technologies

22. FAO actively engaged in the promotion of science, technology and innovation activities in the region. China, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan were assisted to set up innovation laboratories that provide continuous in-country guidance, foster an enabling environment and share knowledge and information. FAO recognizes the strategic role of ICTs and digital innovations in development, including rebuilding resilient agrifood systems and improving market linkages. FAO continued its support to develop e-agriculture strategies, including in Cambodia, Indonesia and Mongolia, where the strategies were endorsed by the respective governments. Key publications included: a booklet on leveraging innovation and technology in food and agriculture in Asia and the Pacific; a collation of 40 cases of innovation from the region; a volume on scaling up inclusive innovation in agrifood value chains; a detailed publication on existing artificial intelligence applications in agriculture; and a report documenting 23 successful cases of digital villages in the region.

COVID-19 response

23. The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme calls for immediate-, medium- and longer-term actions to prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis. The Programme aims to mitigate the immediate impacts while strengthening the longer-term resilience of livelihoods, moving towards a green recovery, and building to transform agrifood systems. FAO's response to the pandemic leverages the Organization's convening power, real-time data, early warning systems and technical expertise to direct support where and when it is most needed.

24. FAO in the region responded to requests from Members regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Rapid assessments were supported in nearly 20 countries, including the Pacific sub-region.² Advice was provided on the rolling out of food security and social protection measures and ensuring the functioning of supply chains while addressing disruptions in sectors such as transportation and marketing. USD 19 million was reprogrammed under existing projects, and 47 new projects were

² Rapid assessments, including those in collaboration with Governments, UNCTs and development partners, were supported in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam and Pacific SIDS (regional).

developed during 2020-2021 valued at over USD 60 million to support immediate response to COVID-19, including TCP support of USD 5.3 million. FAO also completed 24 projects in response to country requests to support mitigating measures in 13 countries (seven in the Pacific)³ in areas such as local food production, food and nutrition security, livelihoods, animal health, and food safety in fresh markets.

25. Several COVID-19 policy briefs on the regional impact of COVID-19 were published. These covered the impacts of export restrictions and the impacts of the virus on fisheries and aquaculture, as well as policy recommendations to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and keep food supply chains functioning. Policy notes on ensuring continuation of agricultural activities, safe transportation of produce and inputs, and food safety from farm-to-fork were developed and distributed to Members. Targeting a wide range of stakeholders, simple messages on supporting smallholders and SMEs and debunking myths of food safety and COVID-19 were developed and disseminated in multiple national and local languages. For example, FAO in Pakistan, together with partners, delivered both physical and remote sensitization messages: close to 80 000 materials printed and distributed by frontline workers were complemented with social media posts, local radio broadcasts, and newly modified online components of the Farmer Field School (FFS) platform.⁴

Data, agriculture censuses and SDG monitoring

26. FAO is a leading agency in providing countries with training and technical assistance in food and agriculture statistics. Activities include: the development of new international statistical methods and standards, such as on SDG indicators and the use of satellite data for crop statistics; the collection, processing and global dissemination of internationally comparable country data; and the strengthening of national statistical institutions in collecting, analysing, disseminating and using food and agricultural statistics for monitoring SDG achievements and informing policy and investment decisions at country level, supporting HIH Initiative implementation.

27. FAO's capacity development in the region focused on providing training and technical assistance to national governments on implementation of new international statistical methods and standards, including: compilation of the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship; adoption of cost-effective technologies such as tablet-based digitized data collection; and new partnerships with international organizations, such as UN Women, the Asian Development Bank, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), to develop and deliver more efficient training, including open online courses.

28. FAO contributed to the planning, development and/or implementation of Agriculture Censuses and Surveys in Bhutan, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Niue, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu. FAO also supported countries in collecting data and compiling SDG indicators such as the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, the food loss index, and women's secure access to agricultural land. FAO is also working to improve data access and dissemination of anonymized microdata and geospatial data. In Afghanistan FAO co-leads twice a year the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) process which constitutes the major data collection exercise informing humanitarian programming.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

³ Projects to support COVID-19 mitigating measures were completed in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Tuvalu and a Pacific regional project covering Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Palau, and Solomon Islands.

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/good-practices/good-practices-details/en/c/1329227/>; <https://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/good-practices/good-practices-details/en/c/1332865/>. Moreover, in Afghanistan, activities included a modified livestock protection package with distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and hygiene kits, conditional cash transfers targeting herders and their families, support for the COVID-19-safe functioning of livestock markets and on-the-ground sensitization activities, the dissemination of Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) and Information Education Communication (IEC) materials, and contingency planning for the Kuchis' safe transhumance to winter pastures. <https://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/good-practices/good-practices-details/en/c/1332865/>

29. FAO generated substantial knowledge to support the formulation of gender-responsive policy and programme formulation and raise awareness on the status of rural women and gender inequalities in the region. Country gender assessments of the agriculture and rural sectors were conducted in Bangladesh, China, India, Kiribati, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Palau and Tuvalu. FAO developed a paper on “Gender, women and youth: Implications for innovation and digitalization Pacific⁵” as a contribution to the SIDS Solutions Forum, during which a technical session titled “Strengthening roles of women and youth in agrifood systems through innovation and digitalization” was held. FAO is also mainstreaming gender equality through the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) regional programme in Asia. A regional consultation on the voluntary guidelines on gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition was organized by the Committee on World Food Security, in close collaboration with other Rome-based Agencies, to contribute to the preparation of the voluntary guidelines.

Regional Initiatives and key achievements

30. APRC 35 adopted four Regional Initiatives that were implemented through a complementary set of 14 programmatic areas of focus in the region. These were built on country needs and priorities and underpinned by normative work at regional and global levels.

31. While COVID-19 affected many aspects of delivery during the biennium, FAO demonstrated its commitment to stay and deliver the field programme in the region. During 2020-21, FAO delivered over 500 projects and adapted them to local conditions significantly altered by the pandemic and employed online implementation methods as appropriate totalling USD 294 million of support to Members. Innovation in implementation methods also reinforced FAO’s programmatic approach and scaling-up by supporting synergies across projects that could move to a virtual modality and continue on-the-ground activity, and by reprogramming savings from travel or workshop costs toward additional material support.

32. Moreover, FAO developed 237 new Trust Fund projects, mobilizing USD 313.6 million in new extra-budgetary resources for the region, as well as 169 new TCPs valued at USD 35.2 million.

33. Field programme delivery during the biennium was underpinned and informed by the development of a wealth of knowledge products: 77 books and 500 other printed and electronic (web-based) products; 106 video and animation products; and thousands of social message impressions broadcast by RAP’s Twitter account.

Regional Initiative 1 on Zero Hunger through promotion of sustainable transformation of food and agriculture systems to end poverty and malnutrition

34. Inclusive and sustainable transformation of agricultural and food systems: The Future Smart Food programme collaborated with 33 organizations and supported eight countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal and Viet Nam) to identify promising neglected and underutilized species that are nutrition-dense, climate-resilient, economically viable and locally available or adaptable.

35. The Mountain Agriculture programme, in partnership with 22 organizations, supported eight countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan and Viet Nam) to conduct regional surveys and national studies on context-specific challenges. A regional TCP project, titled “Strengthening sustainable wetland agriculture for resilient farmers’ livelihoods and ecosystems” was launched in Bangladesh, Thailand and Viet Nam.

36. Diversification of food production and consumption for healthy diets and improved nutrition: To improve the resilience and sustainability of food supply chains amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, FAO helped to promote the production of high-value and nutritious crops, such as vegetables and fruits, in several countries. This was achieved through capacity-building, procurement of seeds and planting materials, and value-chain development in Afghanistan, Mongolia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/cb5760en/cb5760en.pdf>

FAO also promoted the direct-seeded rice system towards resilient, profitable and environmentally friendly rice production systems in the region.

37. FAO advocated “Make Wasting History” through collective action with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) and supported Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Timor-Leste to develop operational roadmaps under the Global Action Plan to address child wasting. Flexible Multi-partner Mechanism (FMM) resources were provided to strengthen sustainable food production and improve availability, affordability and accessibility of safe and nutritious foods in these frontrunner countries.

38. Socio-economic inclusion for rural poverty reduction and sustainable agricultural development: FAO strengthened gender- and youth-inclusive approaches through project and programme implementation at country and regional levels. These included “Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade in Papua New Guinea” (STREIT PNG: USD 94 million by the European Union), which has gender and youth inclusion as one of its principal objectives. To support rollout of the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, FAO conducted research on child labour and domestic migration in fishery communities in several countries in Southeast Asia and identified support needs for 15-to 17-year-old youth in rural areas.

39. Inclusive value chains and food loss and waste: a regional strategy to combat Food Loss and Waste was finalized and the FAO corporate website significantly expanded. FAO’s support in these areas included: (i) PNG-STREIT, supporting smallholder households in cocoa, vanilla and fisheries value chains to sustainably increase their incomes, develop inclusive agribusinesses, and enhance their food and nutrition security; and (ii) in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Philippines, a range of innovative value chain projects (valued at over USD 53 million). These projects were also used to support the response to COVID-19, such as cash transfers and agricultural inputs, as well as to build resilience and recovery among SMEs. Projects on territorial development approaches, particularly Geographical Indications, are being supported in Afghanistan (pine nuts, pomegranate, saffron), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Komaen and Paksong tea and Luang Prabang and Houaphanh silk), the Philippines (cacao and coffee) and Sri Lanka (tea and coffee).

40. Sustainable urban food systems: FAO collected data on progress towards the SDGs and prepared a special topic section on urban food systems for the flagship report “Asia-Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition”. A major food systems project in Bangladesh focused on developing an urban food agenda for the metropolitan area of Dhaka, strengthening food governance and rolling out multiple interventions for sustainable urban and peri-urban value chains. FAO is supporting a project in the Solomon Islands focusing on sustainable urban food chains. In 2020, the World Bank and FAO jointly released “Rich Food: Smart City”, a major urban food survey of 177 cities in the region.

41. Humanitarian and resilience programming: FAO remained committed to responding to Members’ humanitarian and resilience needs as a result of insecurity and conflict, climate change, natural disasters and other crises affecting food security and agriculture. Over 100 emergency projects were delivered during 2020-2021 amounting to USD 130.2 million, representing 44 percent of FAO’s overall field programme delivery in the region. In Afghanistan alone, FAO directly supported 1.33 million of the most food insecure people in 2020 and 2.63 million in 2021 with emergency assistance packages for wheat cultivation, gardening, poultry keeping, and/or cash transfers or cash-for-work. In Myanmar during 2021, FAO delivered USD 5.3 million in community-based support and mobilized USD 4.1 million in new programming for humanitarian support to agricultural livelihoods and food security. FAO also substantially contributed to national government led disaster response plans in Bangladesh, Fiji, Pakistan, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Regional Initiative 2 on Climate change and enhancement of sustainable management and use of natural resources

42. Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, including combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing: During 2020-21, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the physical convening of the

37th Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission and the related technical workshops. FAO supported Members by conducting technical webinars and producing a number of publications. FAO worked on improved stock assessments in marine fisheries to support the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, including: “Multispecies stock assessment for management” and “Fishery subsidies and the current negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO)”. For small-scale fisheries, a regional awareness-raising workshop was convened to assist Members with reporting on SDG 14.b and its associated indicator 14.b.1. A regional training course on stock assessment is under development to promote capacity development for Members in this important technical area.

43. The USD 14 million Global Environmental Facility (GEF) International Waters (IW) regional project “Sustainable management of fisheries, marine living resources and their habitats in the Bay of Bengal region for the benefit of coastal states and communities” has been submitted for endorsement by the GEF Chief Executive Officer, and a GEF IW USD 7.3 million Project Identification Form “Promoting the blue economy and strengthening fisheries governance of the Gulf of Thailand through the ecosystem approach to fisheries” was approved by GEF for full project development. Programme development to secure funding for aquaculture programmes is ongoing with a view to GEF-8 investments. Members are being engaged through partnership between FAO and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific.

44. Water scarcity: FAO developed a USD 15 million Regional Water Scarcity Programme (WSP) based on: (i) a survey of the policy environment and the nature of emerging water scarcity in nine countries (Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam); (ii) mapping of the temporal and spatial development of water scarcity using global data sets and ensemble modelling (1971-2010); and (iii) a survey of the use of simulation modelling to inform water and water scarcity policy in Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The work on WSP continued to analyse water tenure (formal, informal and de facto water rights and use) in the region, with a closer focus on Indonesia and Viet Nam, while a study of the agricultural dimensions of water scarcity was undertaken for the Pacific in late 2021. Tools were developed for water scarcity management, including the publication of “Real Water Savings”, a guide on consumption-based water management, and a remote sensing tool to estimate water balances at system, river basin and national scales.

45. Landscape restoration, including sustainable forest management, sustainable land and soil management, and biodiversity conservation: Under the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM), activities advanced in Cambodia, Fiji, Pakistan, the Philippines and Vanuatu. A regional TCP is being implemented to support Members to develop national landscape restoration plans, strengthen capacities, create regional communication platforms and establish a regional consortium on forest and landscape restoration. The Third Asia-Pacific Urban Forestry Meeting, co-organized with the Royal Forest Department of Thailand, was held to advance the Seoul Action Plan. FAO also promoted action for enhanced protection and conservation of primary forests in the region, while collaborating with partners to promote sustainable forest and land management in Pacific Island countries. Finally, FAO initiated work on linking health, wildlife and livelihoods in the context of One Health and biodiversity mainstreaming.

46. In the context of FLRM, FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) collaborated to strengthen the capacities of future entrepreneurs for developing sustainable businesses. FAO produced e-learning products on forest and landscape restoration and on conflict resolution in forestry. Through the Asia-Pacific component of Phase III (2016-2021) of the FAO-European Union Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Programme, FAO supported nine (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Viet Nam) tropical timber-producing countries to strengthen legality frameworks, legality assurance systems and legality compliance in support of a more sustainable and transparent timber sector and improved market access. Since 2020, a new United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) Programme initiative for “Sustainable Forest Trade in the Lower Mekong Region” is being implemented in five Lower Mekong countries (Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam). Regarding digital agriculture and innovative practices, FAO and the Center for International Forestry

Research (CIFOR) have been working with Members on a road map to promote the use of new technologies in sustainable forest management.

47. For sustainable land and soil management, FAO worked on gaining a better understanding of residue burning and its implications for air quality and carbon emissions. In the context of the Global Soil Partnership, RAP supported the Royal Government of Thailand to establish a regional centre of excellence for sustainable soil management. Technology development is complemented by FAO's work to strengthen responsible land governance. A series of analyses and policy briefs have been produced including on impacts of COVID-19 and actions to ensure the rights of women and indigenous peoples with respect to their access to land.

48. Climate actions and disaster resilience: FAO supported Members in developing the GEF-7 pipeline of more than USD 120 million, which includes a number of LDC Funds for climate change adaptation and IW projects. The first full-size Green Climate Fund (GCF) projects in the region (in Nepal and Pakistan) have been under implementation since 2020 despite COVID-19 challenges. Innovative financial mechanisms involving the private sector are being developed to support scaling up of investments. The new FAO - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) programme Scaling-up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture was launched and is supporting four countries in Asia. At the same time, the Capacity Building in Transparency (CBIT) programme is strengthening monitoring and reporting on climate ambitions of countries with respect to land and agriculture.

49. ASEAN spearheaded contributions to the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture and the Food Systems Summit dialogue. FAO's work continued to support Members to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in the agriculture sector through strengthening capacities for Damage and Loss information management and for Vulnerability and Risk Assessment, and by updating the sector disaster risk management plan. New approaches in building disaster resilience, such as Anticipatory Action and Shock-Responsive Social Protection, gained significant momentum, with a new EUR 12 million Pilot Partnership Programme with the European Union starting in Asia. FAO continues to support the continuous implementation with ASEAN of the Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), the ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster Responsive Social Protection to Increase Resilience and the development of an ASEAN Framework for Anticipatory Action. In addition, several humanitarian anticipatory action activations to protect lives and livelihoods ahead of a shock took place in 2021. These included Afghanistan (drought) and Myanmar (displacement) and were funded by the SFERA anticipatory action window.

50. FAO continues to be a technical lead and important partner for climate-smart agriculture in the region through innovations, tools and knowledge-sharing, including on agro-meteorological services and early warning. The Framework of Nature-based-Solutions for resilient agriculture landscape was tested and tools developed. An Asia-Pacific Climate Risk Analysis and Visualization Platform for Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in Agriculture (CAVA) platform was operationalized and linked with FAO's Geospatial platform to support climate risk screening and climate rationale in programme/project development.

Regional Initiative 3 on One Health and control of transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases

51. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), food safety and public health: One Health in Asia and the Pacific region focused on addressing zoonotic disease prevention and control; food safety, AMR and food-borne illnesses; transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases; and chemical residues. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibility that the virus was transmitted from wildlife, the importance of characterizing risk of disease spill-over at the human-wildlife-livestock-environment interfaces is again featured as an extremely important element of One Health programmes. Furthermore, understanding disease transmission among livestock and wildlife continues to be a standard approach being delivered by FAO and the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GFTADs) programmes, with recent information highlighting the impacts of diseases (African Swine Fever (ASF) and Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR)) on wild boar and Saiga antelope populations.

52. From a transboundary animal disease perspective, FAO supported responses to address major animal disease epidemics including Avian Influenza, Foot and Mouth disease (FMD), PPR, Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) and ASF. FAO established the RAP Virtual Learning Centre to deliver training on transboundary animal diseases, in view of travel restrictions due to the pandemic. FAO delivered virtual trainings on LSD, ASF, FMD and Good Emergency Management Practices; training courses on One Health and AMR are being developed.

53. Through the work of the Regional Steering Committee of the GF-TADs for Asia and the Pacific, FAO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) have been harmonizing disease mitigation approaches and a new regional GF-TADs strategy is under development. Joint GF-TADs interventions are also being expanded to include the impacts of disease on wildlife.

54. FAO continued to strengthen One Health Tripartite collaborations on zoonoses, food safety and AMR with WHO and OIE through the Regional Tripartite Coordination Group, Codex Alimentarius and International Plant Protection Convention standards. The partners also agreed to expand their commitment to strengthening multisectoral coordination and efforts to combat health threats associated with interactions between humans, animals and the environment by inviting UNEP to this collaboration on AMR and food safety.

55. Food safety projects are being implemented in Asia and the Pacific region, including interventions to: revise or formulate food control legislation; deliver training in risk-based inspection and laboratory services; improve food safety, hygiene and biosecurity in fresh markets; implement safe and hygienic street food vending initiatives; incorporate Codex standards and recommended Codes of Practices across value chains; and study food standards requirements as part of larger analysis on non-tariff trade measures and publications linked to these topics.

56. Control and management of transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases: A One Health lens was adopted to mitigate the various negative externalities of agricultural pest management, minimizing impacts of crop protection on human, animal and environmental health. FAO encouraged Members to adopt sustainable tools and technologies that do not impact the environment or pose health risks, including agro-ecological farming tactics, crop/farm diversification schemes and technologies such as semio-chemicals, biopesticides or invertebrate biological control agents.

57. Fall Armyworm (FAW) and Desert Locust (DL) constituted two major migratory pests of regional importance. To address them, FAO facilitated the establishment of regional coordination mechanisms and mobilized resources for emergency/technical cooperation projects. The Regional Steering Group acted under FAO's Global Action of FAW control and operated closely with national governments, CGIAR centres, the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), the ASEAN Secretariat and the private sector. FAO recognizes that ecologically based pest management safeguards human, animal and environmental health, and is thus integral to the One Health concept among Members.

58. FAO proactively extended its support for DL management among Members through technical capacity-building and the provision of material/equipment and logistic support, such as for surveillance and control operations. Working closely with Pakistan's Ministry of National Food Security and Research, FAO also lent its technical support to the Locust Emergency and Food Security project (budget USD 200 million), financially supported by the World Bank.

Interregional Initiative on SIDS Pacific component on food security, nutrition and climate resilience

59. The Pacific component of the Interregional Initiative on SIDS focuses on implementing the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS. Under the initiative, a Pacific Food Security and Nutrition Framework was developed and a working group established to guide and monitor the operationalization of the Global Action Plan in the Pacific, while targeted technical assistance was provided under the Multi-Country Programming Framework for the Pacific Islands.

60. A SIDS Solutions Forum co-hosted by the Government of Fiji and organized in partnership with ITU was held in August 2021. The Forum was an important occasion to enhance information exchange and support the incubation, promotion and scaling up of home-grown and imported solutions. A SIDS Solutions Platform was launched to further support the development, application

and replication of innovative and digital solutions in agrifood systems, nutrition, health and the environment, and to facilitate knowledge exchange within SIDS and beyond.

61. To strengthen the evidence base in support of safe and healthy food production and consumption, and in preparation for the UN Food Systems Summit, FAO provided technical support to conduct national dialogues and develop food systems transformation pathways in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga. In addition, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu received technical support for national Food-Based Dietary Guidelines. An analysis of livestock health and production, including recommendations, was conducted in Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

62. To support agriculture and nutrition data and SDG monitoring, FAO provided technical assistance to strengthen national capacities to monitor SDG Target 2.1. For the first time, data from the Pacific Islands (Samoa) on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale was published in *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*. The Pacific Nutrients Database was reviewed, and an FAO and the Pacific Community (SPC) Pacific Nutrient Database User Guide was published.

63. FAO supported the strengthening of national capacities on integrated land and agro-ecosystem management systems in Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. A Pacific livestock network was established to allow for immediate sharing and exchange of information on transboundary animal diseases. In Samoa, an ASF Risk Assessment was conducted, with a ban on import subsequently enforced. A number of emergency initiatives related to agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and livestock production were carried out in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu in response to food supply issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and tropical cyclones, and work is progressing across subsectors including the fishery sector and coastal communities on disaster risk reduction and preparedness. To improve access to nearshore marine resources, technical support was provided on fishing, management and collective action on anchored fish aggregating devices, and virtual tools were developed to support countries during the pandemic.

64. In the area of forestry and natural resource management, a revision of the Forest and Landscape Restoration Strategy was supported in Vanuatu, and funding mechanisms identified to help scale up restoration efforts. Work progressed on integrated forest management in Solomon Islands, including the establishment of protected areas, the development of a forest monitoring portal and related data, and capacity-building on forest management.

65. With a view to strengthening business and food control practices that promote nutrition and food safety, Samoa's technical capacities were strengthened for the implementation of the National Codex Strategic Plan, and FAO provided technical support to Vanuatu to identify options for establishing a national food development and diagnostic laboratory.

Gaps and Lessons Learned

For better production

66. Consistently raising productivity in the face of challenges such as transboundary pests and diseases, increasing pressure and scarcity on natural resources, and climate change will be critical in Asia and the Pacific region. This yield increase needs to be across a wider diversity of crops as well as livestock and fisheries. Integration of agrobiodiversity, including indigenous species in food production and consumption, technology transfer and innovations, are needed. This will also help improve the resilience of smallholders and family farmers. Technical knowledge is an important factor in determining the adoption of improved management practices and increased yields. The bridging of knowledge gaps among government staff members and practitioners on One Health, capture fishery stock assessment and aquaculture as well as required legal and regulatory frameworks to promote good practices through real and virtual platforms can help to address yield gaps, increase resilience and ensure food security and nutrition. The Programme Priority Areas in the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and guidance from the proceedings of the UN Food Systems Summit and the pathway documents synthesized by Members will be used as the basis for future actions for better production and better nutrition.

For better nutrition

67. Despite the steady economic growth of the past two decades, countries in Asia and the Pacific region carry multiple burdens of malnutrition. Food production has kept pace with population growth but there are substantial gaps on the supply side, including inadequate diversification and low production of nutritious foods, which have led to high costs of a healthy diet. On the demand side, rapid urbanization is increasing the demand for processed and convenience foods, with little regulation on their nutritive content. This in turn is fuelling childhood overweight and obesity even as stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiency rates remain alarmingly high. The region requires technical assistance at policy level to implement the food systems approach so that healthy diets are accessible to all and such diets are obtained from sustainable and resilient production systems.

For better environment

68. Climate impacts such as extreme weather events, spreading pests and diseases, loss of biodiversity, degrading ecosystems, and water scarcity will worsen as the planet warms. These impacts will affect food availability and hinder access to food by disrupting the livelihoods of millions. A good understanding of these risks and vulnerabilities, particularly by smallholders, is fundamental. Although there are increasing numbers of vulnerability and risk assessments, the region needs to develop capacity in using the information, particularly in foresight planning and investment decision-making. Despite political commitments, gaps exist in the region in implementing policies and scaling up proven approaches to reduce vulnerabilities and manage risks. Further investments are needed to create enabling conditions (e.g. tenure, finance, innovation and technology), and to ensure that resource managers – in particular smallholders, communities and family farmers – can effectively access opportunities and scale up actions.

69. Finding ways to sustainably finance and operationally sustain ecosystem restoration, biodiversity conservation and climate actions to achieve the SDGs is a concern for all Members in the region. Increasing access to global finance (such as GCF, GEF and Adaptation Fund), which is lagging behind for LDCs in the region, is currently a pressing topic of interest, in addition to tapping private sector financing and ensuring sustained absorption capacity of increasingly large-scale donor investments.

For better life

70. Increased urbanization, widening urban-rural disparities, and rising socio-economic inequalities have accompanied impressive economic growth and technological advances. Rising income inequality and progress in hunger reduction was slowing down even before COVID-19, and the pandemic has made the situation worse. Reverse migration following the pandemic and the closure of many service-based industries (including tourism) presented governments with fresh challenges on absorbing new influxes of workers back to rural areas. Gaps to address within the rural economy would include: investing in women, youth and entrepreneurs to bridge the rural-urban divide in infrastructure; rebuilding stronger rural-urban linkages through agrifood chains; and addressing climate change through climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive agrifood systems. There is a need for greater attention to rural labour productivity, investments in human capital through vocational training and educations for adults, enhanced competitiveness, and farm and non-farm diversification, all of which would support improved incomes in rural areas. Inclusive and integrated rural transformation to reduce poverty and malnutrition while increasing income and employment opportunities for the rural poor (particularly women, youth, and marginalized groups) remains high on government policy agendas in the region. Digitalization is key and the region has great potential, being endowed with substantial human and technological resources to meet these challenges.

For SIDS

71. Under the Pacific component of the Interregional Initiative on SIDS, multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral implementation of the Pacific Food Security and Nutrition Framework was hindered by challenges in bringing partners together in a fully operational working group, as well as limited country engagement. The implementation strategy developed at the regional level would have benefited from associated country plans guiding work at the national level. With a number of agrifood

systems transformation pathways now developed or being developed in Pacific SIDS, FAO's programme will be guided by food security and nutrition priorities identified at the national level. Transforming agrifood systems in the Pacific Islands will remain a priority for FAO's programme in the Pacific SIDS, and strong emphasis will be placed on the inclusion of agrifood systems priorities in the UNSDCF and other cooperation frameworks, both at national and subregional levels.