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Update on One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) Initiative

Executive summary

This document presents to the 134th Session of the Programme Committee and the 171st Session of the Council an update on the One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) initiative. It provides background information, an overview of key OCOP components, progress made in implementing the Initiative, and the way forward.

The OCOP is an innovative business model to promote inclusive, profitable and environmentally sustainable agrifood systems through the development of Special Agricultural Products (SAPs). The initiative aims to facilitate building sustainable and inclusive food value chains for family farmers and smallholders, support Members in the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The OCOP is designed as a five-year programme (2021-2025), with an organization and coordination mechanism at global, regional and national levels. The implementation of the OCOP includes the promotion of diverse plant-based and animal-based SAPs.

The OCOP fosters internal synergies, linking to other relevant FAO and UN initiatives and programmes, and strengthen external cooperation and collaboration, including technical cooperation mechanisms and resource mobilization.

The OCOP was officially launched by the Director-General of FAO in September 2021. The OCOP Steering Committee, chaired by the Director-General of FAO, was established in November 2021 to oversee its implementation. The OCOP Secretariat, which takes care of daily activities, is hosted by the Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP).

Since March 2022, the OCOP has been launched in all FAO Regions: Africa (RAF), Asia and the Pacific (RAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC), Near East and North Africa (RNE), and Europe and Central Asia (REU). All five launch events were well attended with the participation of high-level government officials and various stakeholders.

On 29 September 2022, an informal briefing was organized for the Members to present the Initiative as well as its latest progress.

The OCOP contributes to the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and its Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), in particular BP1 (Better Production 1) on “Innovation for sustainable agriculture production”.

Currently, over 70 Members from all five Regions have expressed their preliminary interest in promoting the sustainable development of over 40 SAPs.

The priorities for this current phase are to define the SAPs for interested countries, determine OCOP project countries, bring the OCOP to country and farmer levels, mobilize financial resources to support activities at country level, and further increase awareness and information on the OCOP.

Suggested action by the Programme Committee and the Council

The Programme Committee and the Council are invited to:

- note with appreciation the progress made on the OCOP initiative and recognize its role in strengthening national ownership and in assisting Members to leverage their unique potential by identifying Special Agricultural Products (SAPs); and
- consider the way forward to strengthen the coordination and implementation mechanism at global, regional and national levels, in particular the needed support, resource mobilization and partnerships to implement its field activities.

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I. Background

1. Agricultural production systems (crop, livestock, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries) play an essential role in meeting the increasing demands for food, feed, fibre and fuel. Their productivity is affected by natural resource constraints, environmental pollution, ecological degradation and climate change. These production systems still rely on the intensive use of chemical inputs, and can lack integration, optimization, diversification and innovation.
2. The reliance of 75 percent of the world's food on only 12 plant and five animal species underlines the need to identify and use the potentials of neglected or underutilized crops and breeds. These species have been at times overlooked by research, extension services and policymakers, and are rarely allocated resources for their promotion and development. Neglected or underutilized crops and breeds are essential for food security and nutrition – diversifying production and nutritional intake – and can improve livelihoods at scale.
3. FAO has developed the One Country One Priority Product (hereafter “OCOP”) initiative to support more sustainable food value chain systems, increase access to healthy diets, improve farmers' livelihoods and economic growth, while minimizing the use of chemical inputs and natural resources, reducing food loss and waste, and minimizing negative impacts to the environment.
4. Special Agricultural Products (SAPs) have unique qualities and special characteristics that are associated among others, with economic value, geographical locations, farming practices and cultural heritages. Compared to staple food crops, SAPs have not yet fully benefited from agricultural and rural development programmes. They are important examples of agricultural products which contribute to ensuring food security and healthy diets, supporting a sustainable bioeconomy and improving farmers' livelihoods and economic growth, while protecting the environment and biodiversity. SAPs include all kinds of agricultural products, with the potential of being utilized and promoted in local, national, regional and global markets. Therefore, the OCOP will help countries leverage their unique potential by identifying SAPs and ensuring improved access to stable markets, opportunities to improve farmers' livelihoods, and entry points for reaching their defined country priorities.
5. The OCOP aims to facilitate the development of sustainable and inclusive value chains for family farmers and smallholders, by providing new opportunities for SAPs from each country. It will also support Members through the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, and contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Main elements of the OCOP

6. The implementation of the OCOP is based on the principles of collaborative design and country-led implementation. It applies a demand-driven approach, based on comparative advantage when considering all elements of the value chain for each specific product. The OCOP will promote technologies to support sustainable management of resources, with engagement from a wide group of stakeholders across different sectors. The OCOP is **inclusive of countries, products, food value chains, and stakeholders**.
7. The OCOP will support four thematic areas from a sustainable value chain perspective:
 - i) sustainable production using technologies;
 - ii) storage, including postharvest handling and treatment; sorting and packaging; and low-carbon storage;
 - iii) processing, using low-carbon, high-quality and standardized processing systems and;
 - iv) marketing to promote and realize the market value potential of selected SAPs.
8. The OCOP aims to promote sustainable agrifood systems, from production to distribution, and create market opportunities for smallholder and family farmers through the development and integration of MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable, value chains of SAPs.
9. The OCOP outcomes are aligned and will contribute to the *four betters* of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31: to promote sustainable and resilient production systems for *better production*; to

increase quality and diversity for *better nutrition*; to reduce or make more efficient the use of agricultural inputs for a *better environment*; and to ensure inclusive economic growth for a *better life*.

10. OCOP will benefit from the implementation of all Priority Programme Areas (PPAs), in particular, innovation for sustainable agriculture production (BP1), ending food insecurity and malnutrition for the most vulnerable individuals (BN1), improved market transparency and equitable participation in markets (BN5) for SAPs, mitigating climate change and transforming agrifood systems (BE1) through the use of underutilized and neglected SAPs, maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture (BE3), enabling gender equality and rural women's empowerment (BL1), and inclusive rural transformation (BL2).

11. The main OCOP outputs include the establishment of technical networks for innovation and transformation, the dissemination of technologies to support sustainable management, the formulation and application of policies, strategies and standards as enabling tools, and the establishment of effective market access platforms and efficient coordination mechanisms at global, regional and country levels.

12. The OCOP will support the sustainable development of SAPs in all regions, with an initial focus on three key agroecological zones: tropics, drylands and mountainous areas. Drylands are home to an estimated 2 billion people, about 90 percent of them in developing countries, and are estimated to represent 44.2 percent of total global land area by 2050. The tropics constitute 40 percent of Earth's surface area and are home to over 40 percent of the world's population. There are about 720 million people, or 12 percent of the world's population living in mountain regions which cover 25 percent of the world's land surface.

13. The OCOP is product inclusive and its implementation is planned to focus on the sustainable development of plant-based (i.e. field crops, horticulture crops and forestry) and livestock, aquaculture and fishery SAPs.

14. The OCOP aims to be a mechanism that coordinates financial, technical and human resources to address the main challenges identified, and it will support farmers, as well as associated actors all along the value chain. To this end, synergies will be established with FAO and UN global programmes and initiatives.

15. The OCOP will build on external cooperation and collaboration, such as technical cooperation and resource mobilization, to be implemented at the global, regional and national levels. It will create synergies with internal and external funding sources, and other forms of support.

16. The technical cooperation will focus on mobilizing technical resources from research and training institutions, as well as from the private sector. For the financial cooperation, support from financial institutions, development organizations, foundations, private sector, etc. will be sought, as well as welcoming various types of in-kind contributions (e.g. provision of experts). Partnerships are also envisaged to be established with international institutions, development partners and donors (e.g. Japan International Cooperation Agency [JICA], United States Agency for International Development [USAID], European Union [EU], International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], African Development Bank [AfDB], Asian Development Bank [ADB], Islamic Development Bank [IsDB], World Bank [WB], European Bank for Reconstruction and Development [EBRD], Global Environment Facility [GEF], Green Climate Fund [GCF], etc.), countries and regions, civil society, private sector and academia. Government supported and partnership programmes are foreseen to assist in showcasing and upscaling actions to other regions. Funding opportunities are being further explored with FAO Flexible Voluntary Contribution (FVC).

17. The OCOP is a five-year programme (2021-2025) with an organization and coordination mechanism to implement the OCOP at three levels: i) at global level, a Steering Committee (SC) has been set up at FAO headquarters to oversee the implementation; ii) a Regional Steering Group (ROG) will be established for each region to coordinate the implementation regionally; and iii) a National Task Force (NTF) will be formed by each participating country to implement activities at national level.

18. The OCOP is a country-led and country-owned initiative, and all FAO Members are encouraged to join and submit proposals based on their own demands, priorities and comparative advantages. Countries are foreseen to submit their project proposals to the Regional Offices through the FAO Country Office (or equivalent) within given timelines. The Regional Offices will consolidate all submissions from countries, and then submit the results to the OCOP Secretariat within the deadline for further submission to the OCOP SC.

III. Progress on implementation of the OCOP

19. The OCOP was launched on 7 September 2021, with the virtual participation of nearly 1000 attendees from over 150 countries.

20. The OCOP SC, chaired by the Director-General of FAO, has been established to oversee the implementation of this global initiative. The OCOP Secretariat, hosted by the Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP), has been set up to carry out daily implementation activities, in close collaboration with focal points from relevant FAO divisions/units and FAO's Regional Offices.

21. At operational level, an umbrella programme has been formulated for OCOP, based on a programmatic approach, to facilitate operationalizing new field projects and managing resources from development partners and donors. Furthermore, a value-added impact area (VAIA) on the OCOP has been formulated to support the implementation of activities aligned with the Programme Priority Area BP1 "Innovation for sustainable agriculture production".

22. To further support communication and outreach, the OCOP logo and visual identity guidelines have been developed, and the OCOP official website¹ will be launched in November 2022.

23. The OCOP has been launched in Africa (RAF), Asia and the Pacific (RAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC), the Near East and North Africa (RNE), and Europe and Central Asia (REU). All five launch events were well attended with a wide coverage of participation, including Ministers, senior government officials, private sector, donors and FAO partners.

24. Currently, over 70 Members across all five Regions have expressed their preliminary interest in promoting the sustainable development of over 40 SAPs.

25. An informal briefing on the OCOP, to provide Members with information on the initiative and progress made, was held on 29 September 2022 with wide attendance.

IV. The way forward

26. Following the launch of the OCOP at global and regional levels, the following next steps are envisaged:

- i. Determine OCOP project countries in all FAO Regions, based on demand, comparative advantages, national and regional priorities, strategies, programmes, availability of financial resources and other parameters. A launch event for OCOP country projects is planned on 3 November during the upcoming FAO Global Conference on Sustainable Plant Production (2-4 November 2022).
- ii. Develop OCOP concept notes and work plans for each project country and select implementation locations (sites) within the country.
- iii. Mobilize financial resources at global, regional and national levels to support the OCOP.
- iv. Establish working mechanisms within FAO and with relevant national institutions to monitor and facilitate the implementation of OCOP country projects, building on close collaboration between FAO technical divisions/units, Regional/Subregional Offices and Country Offices.
- v. Increase awareness of the importance, achievements and impact of the OCOP through active communication and outreach.

¹ OCOP website: www.fao.org/one-country-one-priority-product

27. According to the OCOP's five-year programme (2021-2025), following the year of planning, coordination and operationalization of the initiative, the next main phases are:

- i. Implementing pilot projects (2022-2023): develop the resource mobilization plan and communication strategy; establish internal and external technical synergies; organize regional launch events; conduct studies, assessments, technical workshops and discussions; define pilot countries, SAPs and technologies to support sustainable management; integrate, demonstrate and validate sustainable development practices for the selected SAPs in pilot countries; organize trainings; and enhance communication and outreach.
- ii. Dissemination, extension and scaling-up (2023-2024): demonstrate the achievements and sustainable development of SAPs in pilot countries; carry out capacity development activities; monitor, report, and plan the scale-up, including defining potential additional SAPs; mobilize resources; and enhance communication.
- iii. Exit strategy (2025): Support countries to scale-up the OCOP outputs; developing exit strategies to gradually reduce FAO's involvement and increase the country's ownership for further promotion of SAPs and innovations; and advocate on achievements and conclude the OCOP activities in the pilot countries.