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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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Results for FAO in the Asia and the Pacific Region – 2022-23

Executive Summary

This document presents the major developments and principal results achieved in the Asia and the Pacific region during the 2022–2023 biennium, which represents the first biennium under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31, focusing on the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems *for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life* (i.e., the *four betters*), leaving no one behind.

Following the Thirty-sixth Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific held in 2022, FAO focused its work in the region through the following Regional Priorities:

- a. Regional Priority 1: transforming agrifood systems for sustainable production and healthy diets;
- b. Regional Priority 2: accelerating sustainable natural resources management for biodiversity conservation and climate action;
- c. Regional Priority 3: supporting inclusive rural transformation for sustainable agrifood systems and equitable rural societies; and
- d. Regional Priority 4: building sustainable and resilient agrifood systems in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

During the biennium, the region dealt with overlapping crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, supply chain disruptions, the food, feed, fuel, fertilizer and finance (5F) crisis, and natural disasters. These shocks required the adaptation and redoubling of FAO's efforts in the region to increase results on the *four betters* in support of Members' priorities and demands.

Major achievements of FAO in the region included tailored assistance to more than 20 countries to shape their agrifood systems transformation plans. FAO supported Members, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and SIDS, to access finance through the growing Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) programme in the region to deliver their environmental commitments and achieve climate

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ambitions, as well as through the Pandemic Fund. FAO also supported the sustainable management of invasive plant pests and diseases through coordinated approaches as well as sustainable and climate-smart livestock production, and good husbandry and farming practices in the region.

The Asia-Pacific Water Scarcity Programme made significant strides in South east Asia. FAO also supported the establishment of the Asian knowledge hub on sustainable soil and land management and developed a comprehensive regional plan for mainstreaming biodiversity in the Pacific. Members' capacities were further developed to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the region.

Moreover, key corporate strategies and initiatives were implemented in the region, including the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative, the One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) and the 1 000 Digital Village Initiative (DVI).

During the 2022–2023 biennium, FAO developed 161 new Trust Fund projects in the region, mobilizing USD 1 billion in new extra-budgetary resources. Of these, the GEF and GCF portfolio accounted for a combined USD 157 million, which additionally mobilized a co-financing amount of USD 1.2 billion. The region also developed 118 new Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCP) valued at USD 27.2 million. Of these, over 80 projects delivered life-saving emergency, humanitarian and resilience support valued at USD 409.4 million.

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 the Organization in responding to the main priorities identified by the Thirty-sixth Session of the Regional Conference (APRC 36);
- b. recognize the delivery and outcomes of FAO's work in the region, particularly in light of the extraordinary challenges posed by the overlapping crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 5F crisis;
- 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; and
- d. note the full alignment of FAO's country-level planning process and the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, building on UN development system repositioning efforts to collectively support country ownership and address priorities and gaps in national Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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I. Introduction

1. This document presents the major developments and principal results achieved in the region during the 2022–2023 biennium, which represents the first biennium under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31, focusing on the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life* (i.e., the *four betters*), leaving no one behind.

2. FAO conducts its regional, subregional and country-level work under the Strategic Framework, delivering against its results framework through identified Programme Priority Areas (PPAs). Furthermore, during the biennium, FAO supported Members in the successful implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change and the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy and their action plans, as well as other thematic strategies.

3. Following APRC 36 held in 2022, FAO focused its work in the region through the following Regional Priorities:

- Regional Priority 1: transforming agrifood systems for sustainable production and healthy diets;
- Regional Priority 2: accelerating sustainable natural resources management for biodiversity conservation and climate action;
- Regional Priority 3: supporting inclusive rural transformation for sustainable agrifood systems and equitable rural societies; and
- Regional Priority 4: building sustainable and resilient agrifood systems in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

4. These Regional Priorities served as a mechanism for delivery at country level, facilitating greater impact of FAO's work on the key priorities in the region, through relevant PPAs and SDGs to ensure a clear causal results hierarchy, complemented by elements to focus, accelerate and enable the Organization's work.

II. Context changes and priority adjustments

5. APRC 36 recommendations included: promoting sustainable agrifood systems transformation; sustainable fisheries management and aquaculture systems; expanding regional support for sustainable forestry; strengthening One Health and the prevention of transboundary diseases, zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance (AMR); providing technical support for enhanced value addition and processing; and promoting food safety and quality assurance under the OCOP Initiative. Members also recommended mainstreaming cross-cutting themes and accelerators across the four Regional Priorities, and strengthening the contributions of the FAO Regional Technical Commissions in the region.

6. The Asia and the Pacific region dealt with overlapping crises which raised concerns about food security, including the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, supply chain disruptions, the 5F crisis, and natural disasters. These caused price increases for food and agricultural inputs, higher unemployment, and reduced economic activity. Threatening the food security and livelihoods of millions of people across this region, these shocks required the adaptation and redoubling of FAO's efforts on the *four betters* in support of Member priorities and requests.

7. Under *better production* and *better nutrition*, FAO adapted its value chain, and food loss and waste (FLW) portfolio to promote the production of high-value and nutritious crops and livestock, including through market linkage facilitation, capacity building, provision of agricultural inputs, digitalization, and technology transfer. Support was provided for fresh-market improvement in the wake of the pandemic, and FAO also enhanced awareness raising and capacities on the importance of healthy diets and food safety. FAO further emphasized support for smallholder farmers and casual labourers, who were more likely to report being affected by shocks, be they economic, agricultural or climatic.

8. Towards *better environment*, FAO supported improved targeting and design of climate finance investments in agrifood systems, and enhanced Members' capacities to take anticipatory actions to reduce the negative impacts of disasters across the region. Furthermore, FAO advanced the mainstreaming of biodiversity across agricultural sectors and stepped up technical support to enhance policy coordination in water resource management in the region. To this end, FAO in the region mobilized USD 157 million through the GEF and GCF.

9. For *better life*, FAO provided country policy impact support and regional assessments in response to the converging crises on food, energy and finance. Through the HIH Initiative in the region, FAO supported countries to develop programmes and investment plans targeted towards raising incomes, reducing inequities and alleviating vulnerabilities among rural populations.

III. Achievements in the region

III.1 Regional Priorities and key achievements in 2022–23

10. APRC 36 endorsed four Regional Priorities that enabled the implementation of consolidated actions fully aligned with the PPAs under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31. The four Regional Priorities were built on country needs and priorities, and underpinned by normative work at regional and global levels.

11. During 2022–23, FAO developed 161 new Trust Fund projects in the region, mobilizing USD 1 billion in new extra-budgetary resources. Of these, the GEF and GCF portfolio accounted for a combined USD 157 million, which additionally mobilized a co-financing amount of USD 1.2 billion. The region also developed 118 new TCPs valued at USD 27.2 million. Of these, over 80 projects delivered life-saving emergency, humanitarian and resilience support valued at USD 409.4 million.

Regional Priority 1: transforming agrifood systems for sustainable production and healthy diets (as presented at APRC 36)

Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)	SDG Targets	Regional Areas of Emphasis
Better Production (BP) BP1: Innovation for sustainable agriculture production	2.3, 2.4, 6.4, 9.5, 15.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of more location-specific integrated technology for crop management as well as technology transfer and adoption; and • development of national pathways and regional partnerships towards more productive and sustainable agrifood systems to achieve SDG 2 and other targets.
BP2: Blue transformation	2.1, 2.2, 14.2, 14.4, 14.6, 14.7, 14.b, 14.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of capacity in fishery stock assessment for management and monitoring SDG 14; and • aquaculture, based around innovation and sustainable intensification, including through the Aquaculture Regional Technical Platform
BP3: One Health	1.5, 3.d, 15.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention and control of zoonotic diseases and transboundary pests and diseases of plants, aquaculture and livestock; • expanded One Health to include forestry, wildlife, natural resources management and environment sectors; • safe farming practices, phytosanitary improvements; and • AMR
BP4: Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources	1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 6.b, 9.3, 14.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange of knowledge and best practices on family farming and agroecology; and • enhanced access by small-scale producers, traders and agri-entrepreneurs to digital technologies, credit, inputs, information and training, and strengthening laws that

		protect land tenure (including forestland), water rights, and financial services to women and indigenous communities
Better Nutrition (BN) BN1: Healthy diets for all	1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4 12.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and programmes for the production of diversified and nutrient-dense foods that are affordable and accessible to people and nurture healthy dietary habits.
BN2: Nutrition for the most vulnerable	1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of child wasting in the region by 2030.
BN3: Safe food for everyone	2.1, 2.2, 3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened national food control systems; • food safety solutions for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); and • Codex food standards to mitigate hazards in e-commerce and trans-boundary trade.
BN4: Reducing food loss and waste	2.1, 2.2, 12.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Strategy on FLW; • regional knowledge base and awareness raising on FLW impacts on climate, food security and nutrition; and • Policy guidance and technical advice to Members on improving measurement/data on FLW at local and national levels

12. Under Regional Priority 1, FAO assisted over 20 countries in refining their agrifood systems transformation plans, which were presented at the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment in Rome in July 2023. FAO developed technical guidelines for sustainable agriculture, including seed systems and integrated crop management, as well as case studies for sustainable wetlands, and facilitated technology transfer at national and regional levels. A Regional Standard for Phytosanitary Measures on mango was developed to facilitate trade in the region, and eight country assessment reports on improving phytosanitary measures were completed. In addition, FAO supported the establishment of the Conservation Agriculture Alliance for Asia-Pacific and a regional network for fall armyworm.

13. FAO supported sustainable climate-smart livestock production, and good farming practices in the region. Coordination and information sharing were strengthened under the new Framework for the Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases Strategy for Asia-Pacific 2023–27 and a two-year work plan. FAO developed Guidelines on Antimicrobial Use and Resistance for Asia and the Pacific. FAO also successfully mobilized over USD 68 million through the Pandemic Fund.

14. FAO supported the Regional Action Plan for Family Farming in South Asia in collaboration with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation’s Agriculture Centre, and the International Co-operative Alliance and the Asia Farmers Association.

15. Furthermore, FAO supported Members’ capacities to meet SDG 14 targets (rebuilding stocks, combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, ensuring access to resources of small-scale fisheries) and to utilize fishery stock assessment for management decision-making. FAO and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific convened two high-level meetings to promote sustainable aquaculture in Asia.

16. High-level national multidisciplinary teams were formed in Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam under the Asia-Pacific Water Scarcity Programme. Additionally, FAO supported country teams to build local skills in water accounting.

17. FAO trained authorities in food safety in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Mongolia and Sri Lanka. Fresh market improvement, a crucial activity in the aftermath of the pandemic, was initiated in Bangladesh, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Nepal. The flagship Asia and the

Pacific – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition highlighted the continuous deterioration in the regional situation.

18. In June 2022, FAO launched its Regional Strategy on Food Loss and Waste Reduction in Asia and the Pacific, and provided support to reduce food losses in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste.

Regional Priority 2: accelerating sustainable natural resources management for biodiversity conservation and climate action (as presented at APRC 36)

Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)	SDG Targets	Regional Areas of Emphasis
Better Environment (BE) BE1: Climate change mitigation and adapted agrifood systems	2.4, 6.4, 13.1, 13.2, 13.b, 14.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate services for evidence-based policies, planning and investment decision-making; access to global environmental and climate finance; and scaling up climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and monitoring, reporting and verification.
BE3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture	2.5, 6.6, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystem restoration (including forest and landscape restoration, sustainable forest management, and sustainable land and soil management); and sustainable use of biodiversity, through capacity development.
BE4: Achieving sustainable urban food systems	1.1, 2.1, 11.a, 12.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical support for enhancing food value chains supplying urban areas; urban food governance for inclusive food access and affordability for the urban poor; and urban forestry solutions for enhanced delivery of ecosystem services.
BL4: Resilient agrifood systems	1.3, 1.5, 2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of multiple and compounded risks to agrifood systems and livelihoods from economic and environmental shocks; governance mechanisms (including policy, planning and institutional coordination) for multi-risk management in agriculture, forestry, and other land uses sectors; vulnerability and risk reduction measures, targeting smallholder farmers and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; and anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection.

19. The GEF programme in the region expanded, focusing on supporting Members, especially LDCs, to secure finance for their climate ambitions. GEF-8 (2022–2026) prioritizes agriculture, forestry, fisheries, land use, climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation. FAO led four transboundary freshwater projects involving six countries, valued at USD 33 million in GEF grants. The first multi-country GCF Readiness Programme involving six countries from South east Asia was approved during the biennium. FAO also initiated an investment roadmap for agricultural climate services and led the development of new analytical tools for improved targeting and design of climate finance investments.

20. FAO advanced ecosystem restoration and the mainstreaming of biodiversity across agricultural sectors, including by co-leading the Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and establishing the Asian knowledge hub on sustainable soil and land management. In Nepal and Pakistan, FAO supported the development of National Action Plans for Forest and Landscape Restoration. Sustainable and legal

forestry and trade in the Lower Mekong region was also supported through the UN-REDD Programme.¹ Moreover, FAO supported improved monitoring and quantification of the contribution of social forestry to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), as well as reporting processes of National Forest Inventories and REDD+² to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

21. In partnership with other Members of the Issue-based Coalitions, as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), FAO provided guidance to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in spearheading anticipatory action, with 2023 dedicated by ASEAN as “The Year of Anticipatory Action”.

Regional Priority 3: supporting inclusive rural transformation for sustainable agrifood systems and equitable rural societies (as presented at APRC 36)

Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)	SDG Targets	Regional Areas of Emphasis
BP5: Digital agriculture	1.4, 5.b, 9.c, 17.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Village Initiative (DVI) to accelerate rural and village digital ecosystem development; and digitally powered agrifood systems through digital policy and strategy development, and empowerment of women, youth and small-scale producers through digital literacy.
BL1: Gender equality and rural women’s empowerment	2.3, 5.4, 5.a, 5.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific (2022–2025); and gender mainstreaming in policy processes on food security, nutrition, social resilience, equal access to resources (e.g. land, water), and digital inclusion.
BL2: Inclusive rural transformation	1.1, 8.3, 8.5, 10.1, 10.2, 10.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilient rural–urban agrifood markets, including e-commerce and digital trade, inclusive value chains, MSME and agrifood enterprises development, and empowerment of women and youth through agrifood and MSME investments and digital skills capacity.
BL5: Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative	1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.a, 10.1, 10.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated territorial development and targeted investments to achieve SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 10 (reduced inequality).

22. FAO supported countries in developing digital agriculture strategies including in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and several of the Pacific SIDS. FAO with the International Telecommunication Union hosted the Fourth Digital Agriculture Solution Forum for Asia and the Pacific and launched a regional analysis on youth entrepreneurship and agritech startups to support rural transformation through digitalization.

23. FAO’s emergency work included support and capacity building for regional agricultural needs assessments in response to the global crises on food, energy and finance. FAO’s field programmes in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka increased significantly, while work in Myanmar shifted focus to local partners and emergency and resilience work.

24. FAO responded to emergencies such as the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcanic eruption in the Pacific, the 2022 Pakistan floods, and cyclones in Myanmar and Vanuatu, and is currently supporting Nepal following the earthquake in November 2023.

¹ United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

² Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus the sustainable management of forests, and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks

25. FAO published the Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan 2022–2025 for Asia and the Pacific, conducted country gender assessments and showcased gender mainstreaming efforts through FAO newsletters.

26. The HIH Initiative was launched in several priority countries, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Available data was inventoried, and statistical information and datasets integrated into FAO’s corporate platform. Several countries developed HIH programmes and mobilized investments in priority sectors and regions, with seven Members completing HIH technical studies and seeking necessary investments.

Regional Priority 4: building sustainable and resilient agrifood systems in the Pacific SIDS (as presented at APRC 36)

Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)	SDG Targets	Regional Areas of Emphasis
BP2: Blue transformation	2.1, 2.2, 14.2, 14.4, 14.6, 14.7, 14.b, 14.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seafood value chains Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing Data and statistics: SDG 14 monitoring
BP3: One Health	1.5, 3.d, 15.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pest and disease prevention and management Early warning and management of health risks, including AMR Biosecurity legislation and policy alignment with international standards Ecologically based alternatives to highly hazardous pesticides
BP4: Small-scale producers’ equitable access to resources	1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 6.b, 9.3, 14.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe and sustainable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture: safe and equitable access to productive nearshore species, enabling and improving effectiveness of community-based fisheries management, small-scale aquaculture Smallholder agriculture, agroforestry and forestry: community-based governance and decision-making mechanisms, traditional resource management and farming systems, and value chains Data and statistics: adaptation of production and yield data collection methodologies in small islands context
BP5: Digital agriculture	1.4, 5.b, 9.c, 17.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SIDS Solutions Platform: knowledge-sharing and cooperation E-agriculture strategies (formulation and implementation) Access to up-to-date technical, meteorological and market information
BN1: Healthy diets for all	1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4, 12.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food and nutrition policy and programme design and implementation Nutrition mainstreaming across sectoral policies Support to national coordination and planning mechanisms for food security and nutrition Advocacy and awareness at national and community levels
BN3: Safe food for everyone	2.1, 2.2, 3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good manufacturing, handling, packaging and hygiene practices National Codex committees

BE1: Climate change mitigating and adapted agrifood systems	2.4, 6.4, 13.1, 13.2, 13.b, 14.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Smart Agriculture practices for integrated crops, trees and livestock production • Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture and NDC implementation • Data and statistics: SDG 15 monitoring and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the sustainable management of forests, and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) GCF readiness proposals
BE3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture	2.5, 6.6, 14.4, 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity and sound management of chemicals in agriculture • Forest and landscape restoration • Use of diverse, multipurpose local species in agroforestry systems • Evidence-based management and governance, technological innovation and private-sector engagement in marine ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation (e.g. sea grass bed and mangrove regeneration, nearshore coastal ecosystem restoration)
BL4: Resilient agrifood systems	1.3, 1.5, 2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food security monitoring system • Policy development and implementation, including resource allocation • Emergency assistance following natural disasters • Fisheries Disaster Risk Reduction strategies and management

27. FAO supported the participation of 11 Pacific SIDS in the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment and 13 Pacific leaders in the High-Level Ministerial Event for SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs (both held in Rome). FAO also provided technical guidance to Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu to streamline and develop their agrifood systems transformation pathways.

28. In the fisheries sector, FAO has been instrumental in building capacities in food safety, fish processing and marketing in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tonga. FAO also facilitated access to markets and finance for fishers' associations in Fiji and Tonga, and supported women members of these organizations to contribute to national fish policy.

29. FAO enhanced capacities on the One Health approach to disease prevention and management and AMR, as well as on biosecurity and One Health on farms, prevention of African swine fever, and the Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme. FAO facilitated the development of food-based dietary guidelines in Cook Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue and Palau. Consultations were organized with 11 Pacific SIDS to develop national e-agricultural strategies.

30. FAO produced and disseminated two regional guidelines on Sustainable Soil Management and Climate-smart Livestock Management in the Pacific within the framework of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture. FAO also enhanced farmers' capacities in climate-smart agriculture approaches in Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu, and enabled Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands to participate in UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies meetings. FAO supported Fiji in developing its GCF concept note and developed the Pacific Action Plan to promote cohesive action on mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors, including fisheries, crops, livestock and forestry, in the Pacific region. Moreover, FAO collaborated with Pacific Members to produce the Pacific Forest Sector Outlook Study 2023.

III.2 Accelerators, cross-cutting themes and partnerships

31. FAO utilized data and statistics to address challenges at national and subnational levels, including supply chain disruptions caused by COVID-19 containment constraints and the war in Ukraine. FAO supported national agricultural censuses and surveys, and compiled SDG farm-based indicators, including in Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Samoa and Timor-Leste.
32. FAO collaborated with experts from national governments, academia and the private sector to enhance the use of Earth Observation data to produce crop statistics, also supporting Timor-Leste in using Global Positioning System-based crop boundary information, linked to its agriculture census data.
33. The Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan 2022–2025 for Asia and the Pacific demonstrated FAO’s commitment to achieving gender equality in sustainable agriculture and rural development. In 2023, FAO published country gender assessments of agriculture and rural livelihoods for Bhutan, Cambodia and Palau, and conducted new assessments in Nepal, the Philippines and Viet Nam.
34. FAO prioritized engagement with private sector entities, with 20 active engagements across seven countries. The partnership with Grow Asia included facilitating an inclusive regional private sector consultation for APRC 37. In 2023, FAO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the China Chamber of International Commerce to improve rural development and eradicate poverty and hunger. Private sector mapping and linkage support for HIH countries were instrumental in mobilizing investment.
35. In 2023, South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) focused on mobilizing financial partnerships and knowledge-sharing initiatives to promote responsible agricultural investment. A regional investment database was developed to match investment needs with funding mechanisms. SSTC supported implementation of OCOP and HIH in the region, including facilitating the engagement of country offices with the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank and organizing investment roundtables on forestry.
36. To advance the development agenda of Pacific SIDS, FAO established a Pacific working partnership for joint programming with the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme in 2023 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Programme.

III.3 FAO’s corporate initiatives, new ways of working

37. FAO advanced the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy in Asia and the Pacific through regional dialogues and events such as the 2022 Youth Hackathon for Reducing Food Loss and Waste held in Beijing and the 2022 Pacific SIDS Solutions Forum. These initiatives showcased innovative solutions to accelerate the sustainable transformation of agrifood systems and ensure food security and nutrition for all.
38. FAO also supported nine HIH priority countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) to formulate investment plans and attract development partners, including multilateral development banks and the private sector. The support included knowledge-sharing sessions and the Investment Forum in Rome, where countries showcased their investment plans and prospects for investors and farmers.
39. In May 2022, FAO launched the OCOP Initiative in Asia and the Pacific, establishing a regional coordination mechanism and a regional knowledge platform. FAO is supporting countries in the region to develop national OCOP strategies and action plans, and OCOP projects have been initiated in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Nepal, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

40. Under DVI, FAO developed the Digital Readiness Assessment tool and implemented it in ten countries, covering 107 digital villages. This tool aids in advancing information and communication technology (ICT) and digital innovations for the SDGs, developing national digital agriculture strategies and solutions to revitalize rural communities, facilitating better market linkages and improving the efficiency and productivity of agriculture and rural incomes and livelihoods. A new DVI knowledge platform featuring best practices from over 15 countries was also developed.

IV. One FAO

41. FAO responded to the overlapping crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 5F crisis. It provided evidence-based responses, intensified technical assistance and catalysed change across agrifood systems. Working closely with the Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) in headquarters, the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) implemented timely emergency projects to address urgent economic needs or crises in affected countries in the region, such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. RAP also worked with headquarters units, the Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands, and country offices to improve field programme implementation, and collaborated with the Environmental and Social Management Unit in headquarters to provide guidance on safeguard issues.

42. In the framework of the Regional Priorities, FAO integrated resource planning across different funding sources (such as Regular Programme, voluntary contributions and the Technical Cooperation Programme) for effective delivery and supported projects and resource mobilization efforts.

43. FAO engaged in inter-agency dialogue for UN reform in the Asia and the Pacific region. FAO attended the Asia-Pacific Regional Collaborative Platform meeting, while at country level, UN collaboration included the direct engagement of Country Representatives in UN Country Teams and various activities related to the reform, such as the preparation of the Common Country Analysis, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and joint work plans.

V. Gaps and lessons learned

For better production

44. Transforming agrifood systems for efficiency, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainability is critical, especially in light of recent shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and climate change-induced weather disruptions. It is therefore crucial to consider hidden environmental, social and health costs associated with increasing productivity in Asia-Pacific agrifood systems.³

For better nutrition

45. The deterioration in progress towards achieving food security and nutrition in the region calls for intensified agrifood systems-based approaches. Reducing the cost of a healthy diet is a critical element for eliminating hunger (SDG 2) and achieving other SDGs.⁴ Rapid urbanization is increasing the demand for processed and convenience foods, with little regulation on their nutritive content. The region requires policy-level technical assistance to ensure that healthy diets are accessible to all from sustainable and resilient production systems.

For better environment

46. Despite progress, the region is reversing on climate change and several environment-related SDGs (SDG 6.6, SDG 11.5, SDG 12.2, SDG13.2 and SDG 15.5). The region needs to develop capacity in using vulnerability and risk assessments related to the impacts of climate change and ecosystem degradation, particularly in foresight planning and investment decision making.

³ FAO. 2023. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2023 – Revealing the true cost of food to transform agrifood systems*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7724en>

⁴ FAO, UNICEF, WFP & WHO. 2023. *Asia and the Pacific – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2022. Urban food security and nutrition*. Bangkok, FAO. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en?details=cc3990en>

Investments are needed to create enabling conditions and to ensure that resource managers can effectively access opportunities and scale up actions.

For better life

47. The region continues to experience increased urbanization, widening urban–rural disparities, and rising socioeconomic inequalities. Addressing these gaps will require investing in women, youth and entrepreneurs, including through digitalization, rebuilding stronger rural–urban linkages through agrifood chains, and addressing climate change. There is a need to increase rural labour productivity and farm and non-farm diversification in order to improve incomes in rural areas. Inclusive and integrated rural transformation remains high on government policy agendas.

For SIDS

48. Transforming agrifood systems in the Pacific Islands remains a priority for FAO’s programme in the Pacific SIDS. The emphasis is on the inclusion of agrifood systems’ priorities in the UNSDCF and other cooperation frameworks at all levels. FAO will also emphasize the importance of partnerships, innovation for local solutions, and investments.