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Progress made on the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States and on FAO's Interregional Initiative on SIDS: Case of Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS¹

Executive Summary

The Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States (GAP)² was officially launched during the 40th Session of FAO Conference, held in July 2017. The GAP recommends actions to address food security and nutrition challenges through specific actions at the global, regional, national and local levels to achieve three interrelated and mutually reinforcing objectives:

- a) enabling environments for food security and nutrition;
- b) establishing sustainable, resilient food systems that support healthy diets and nutrition;
- c) empowering people and communities to achieve improved food security and nutrition, with a focus on vulnerable groups.

FAO will deliver its contribution to the implementation of the GAP through an Interregional Initiative (IRI) on SIDS.

¹ Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a distinct group of developing countries that share similar vulnerabilities and development challenges. The UN SIDS group is made up of 37 countries across three regions: the Caribbean region, Pacific region, and Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS)

² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7297e.pdf>

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The IRI is designed to reflect the specificities and requirements of each SIDS subregion in relation to the GAP. In addition to the three subregional specific components, the IRI includes a cross-regional component to promote South-South Cooperation, partnerships and experience sharing.

Guidance sought from the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to:

- a) note progress and provide guidance in the implementation of the activities under the Interregional Initiative
- d) review the Atlantic and Indian Ocean component of the Interregional Initiative;

I. FAO's role in the implementation of the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States

1. In 2014, the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) met in Samoa. The SAMOA Pathway, the outcome document of the conference, emphasized the need for national leadership and international cooperation in order to overcome the unique sustainable development challenges faced by SIDS. Ensuring improved food security and nutrition was identified as one of the most important challenges to be addressed. This was reiterated during the second International Conference on Nutrition in 2014 (ICN2), which highlighted the complex burdens faced by the SIDS with regard to malnutrition, undernourishment, micronutrient deficiency and obesity.
2. The SAMOA Pathway (paragraph 61) invited FAO to facilitate a biennial forum to develop an Action Programme addressing food and nutrition challenges in SIDS. In this context, FAO has worked closely with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the United Nations Office for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) to develop the GAP, which was officially launched in Rome during the 40th Session of the FAO Conference, in July 2017.
3. The GAP is a global guidance document intended to strengthen the coherence and coordination of global and regional actions related to food security and nutrition in SIDS, as well as to support SIDS' governments in strengthening their national approaches and ensuring that their needs and priorities are met in relevant global and regional policy processes.
4. The GAP recommends actions at local, national, regional, and global levels to achieve three interconnected and mutually-reinforcing objectives:
 - a) enabling environments for food security and nutrition;
 - b) establishing sustainable, resilient food systems that support healthy diets and nutrition;
 - c) empowering people and communities to achieve improved food security and nutrition, with a focus on vulnerable groups.
5. It emphasizes the need for a more integrated, multistakeholder approach to address the unique food security and nutrition challenges faced by SIDS. It aims to accelerate actions to support SIDS' efforts towards attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, bringing the SAMOA pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals together.
6. Implementation of the GAP calls for:
 - a) identification of specific needs to ensure that the GAP is aligned with existing national food and nutritional security strategies;
 - b) development of joint regional and national action programmes;
 - c) effective knowledge sharing and interregional activities across the SIDS;
 - d) strengthened coordination of development partners' work with SIDS governments, working together in resource mobilization at international, regional and national levels.
7. FAO will deliver its contribution to the implementation of the GAP through the IRI on SIDS.
8. The GAP and the IRI, as FAO's main delivery mechanism, have been designed with the recognition that SIDS face many shared constraints to their sustainable development: a narrow resource base; reliance on ocean resources; volatile market dependencies and high food imports; high costs for energy, transportation and communication; and fragile natural environments, amongst others. These constraints imply increased vulnerability to shocks and limited development of commercially oriented agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

9. To reflect the specificities and requirements of each subregion in relation to the GAP3, the IRI comprises three subregional components for the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS), Caribbean and Pacific. In addition, the IRI has a cross-regional component to promote South-South Cooperation, partnerships and experience sharing.

10. In the spirit of the GAP, the IRI places particular emphasis on developing partnerships within and outside the UN system, joining forces with other agencies, regional organizations, governments, development partners, civil society and the private sector.

11. Finally, to address the need for a more integrated, multistakeholder approach, the IRI is designed to promote cross-strategic programme support to SIDS. The IRI will build on FAO's existing and planned programmes, by promoting knowledge sharing and facilitating exchange of good practices. This will facilitate scaling up FAO's level of interventions from the existing set of small projects to a more programmatic approach that can attract further resources, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) funding.

II. Roadmap for the Development and Implementation of the Interregional Initiative in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS Policy convergence

12. Based on the outcomes of a consultation workshop held in April 2017, a number of preliminary activities were formulated for implementation between June 2017 and April 2018, under the AIMS subregional component of the IRI, with a focus on domesticating the GAP.

13. Step 1: Formalization and operationalization of the food security and nutrition technical networks of Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS at the national, regional and interregional levels.

14. Step 2: Advocacy and resource mobilization at the level of governments and other development partners to improve food security and nutrition.

15. Step 3: Establishment or identification of the structure in charge of food security and nutrition at national and regional level.

16. Step 4: Promotion of GAP and partnerships with regional organizations for its implementation in Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS.

17. ***Roadmap for the formulation and adoption of the IRI Atlantic and Indian Oceans SIDS subregional component:***

- **October-December 2017:** drafting of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS component of the FAO IRI;
- **December 2017-January 2018:** translation and review of the draft proposal at country level (through the multisectoral countries' teams established in Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS);
- **End of January 2018:** technical validation workshop, with Permanent Secretaries/Directors, multisectoral countries' teams members, and FAO team;
- **February 2018:** FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) – presentation and endorsement by Ministers of the “Atlantic and Indian Ocean subregional component of the FAO IRI for Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS”.

³ In the Pacific subregion for example, the component will include a set of activities to address the growing burden that Non-communicable Diseases are creating for Pacific Island economies and their communities.

III. Delivering the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS component: Key priorities and progress made

18. In April 2017, the second regional consultation meeting of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS was convened to provide inputs to the finalization of the GAP and to initiate the development of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean component of the IRI on SIDS. The countries concerned are Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Sao Tome and Principe (Atlantic Ocean SIDS) and Comoros, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles (Indian Ocean SIDS), as well as the United Republic of Tanzania (Zanzibar)⁴.

19. The following specific objectives were achieved:

- 1) information provided to officials from each of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS about the preparations underway towards the adoption of the GAP;
- 2) Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS made familiar with the content of the GAP and the linkages and alignment with existing global and regional processes, including the Indian Ocean Regional Programme on Food Security and Nutrition (PRESAN);
- 3) assistance provided to these SIDS to strategize as a group in identifying priority actions in addressing Food Security and Nutrition, and in preventing duplication of efforts at national level in monitoring and evaluation, reporting or allocation of resources;
- 4) a platform made available for SIDS to adopt a common understanding of the benefits of working together in domesticating the GAP, and in so doing to encourage SIDS to take ownership of the GAP;
- 5) informed the development of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean component of the IRI on SIDS as FAO's mechanism for the implementation of the GAP.

20. All participating countries agreed that the food security and nutrition challenges that they face (notwithstanding differences across the countries), are well addressed in the GAP.

21. Several key issues were highlighted:

- 1) A special emphasis was put on the specific challenge of coordination both within nations (across-ministries and public-private) and between nations. Although SIDS are at different stages in the development and implementation of national food security and nutrition strategies and have different institutional structures for coordination, all agreed that there is much to improve in this respect.
- 2) Concrete actions such as sharing of experience by parliamentarians, and efforts to reinforce existing intersectoral platforms would be important in stimulating these improvements.
- 3) Strategies for addressing significant levels of food imports are a particular feature of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS. The scarcity of agricultural lands in SIDS should be addressed through sustainable use of existing ones for a variety of healthy foods.
- 4) Managed trade, with some rebalancing of the ratio of imports to domestic production of traditional products would be important. For the Indian Ocean SIDS for example, the possibility of improved intraregional trade with Madagascar would be an important part of the strategy, requiring attention to the appropriateness of existing standards, specifically the sanitary and phytosanitary measures.
- 5) Aligning the GAP with existing processes, in particular the Agenda 2030 with respect to indicators would allow the GAP to be used as a framework for strengthening interaction between national and regional bodies (the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission [IOC], the Economic Community of Central African States [ECCAS], the Economic Community of West

⁴ Zanzibar is not officially classified as a SIDS but shares common characteristics with them and will be supported under the IRI on SIDS.

African States [ECOWAS], and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa [COMESA], etc.).

22. In addition, it was suggested that the IRI address issues of:
- 1) increased production, productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural sector;
 - 2) establishment of adequate measures for regional and interregional markets for agricultural products, including sanitary and phytosanitary measures;
 - 3) formulation of policy measures and action plans towards improvement of nutrition security, in line with ICN2 recommendations;
 - 4) strengthening the resilience capacities of communities to face climate change and natural disasters challenges;
 - 5) facilitation of experience sharing and lessons learned between the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS;
 - 6) establishment of a common Coordination Mechanism for the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway Action programme to address food and nutritional challenges.
23. Participants agreed that the IRI Subcomponent for Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS should prioritize a number of key areas for immediate action: (i) strengthening coordination platforms; (ii) revising dietary guidelines, particularly with the inclusion of local products; (iii) strengthening data collection and analysis; and (iv) linking producers to tourist markets.
24. The key priorities identified by the countries and presented above are the basis for the formulation of the technical document designated as the “Atlantic and Indian Ocean component of the IRI for Food Security and Nutrition in the SIDS”.

Progress made

25. In developing the IRI, it is recognized that FAO already delivers significant support to the Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS. The regional project on "*Adoption of efficient and climate-smart agriculture practices in African Small Island Developing States*", funded by the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF), aims to build on climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices, improve climate change mitigation and adaptation and promote sustainable economic agriculture development knowledge networks across African SIDS.
26. Project activities will be implemented in three pilot countries, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau and the Seychelles. However, the other Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS (Comoros, Mauritius, and Sao Tome and Principe) will benefit through intraregional exchange and knowledge sharing activities.
27. The project focuses on four major components:
- a) **promoting the adoption of efficient and climate-smart food production practices** which will include a broad range of activities, such as the promotion of efficient and CSA practices by smallholders using a wide range of easy-to-grow crops of high nutritional value and market value; strengthening of the organizational capacity of smallholders to cope with the impact of climate change; promotion of the use of fish aggregating devices (FAD) to enhance domestic fish availability and domestic consumption; and reduction of post-harvest losses and food safety risks associated with domestic food product chains;
 - b) **promotion of viable domestic and regional market opportunities for value-added food products** which will include several activities, such as the enhancement of capacities of smallholders to link to other value chain actors and strengthen their participation in viable food markets; identification of high-value niche market opportunities including Fair Trade, Organic, Geographical Indication, etc.;
 - c) **promotion of appropriate nutrition behaviour through sustainable food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition** with the development of appropriate Food Based

Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) for appropriate policies and legislation on the quality of diets and nutrition education;

d) **build African SIDS knowledge sharing platforms** that highlight commonalities to strengthen intraregional collaborative approaches whilst recognizing the particularities of each country, such as their economic status.

28. For capacity building purposes, FAO organized a regional workshop on the topic “Ensuring that the trade of agricultural and food products improves nutrition in the SIDS” in Antananarivo, in October 2017, which brought together representatives from Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania (Zanzibar), as well as the regional bodies COMESA, ECOWAS and IOC. This workshop contributed to improve countries’ understanding of the opportunities and challenges posed by increased intraregional trade for nutrition, and to identify key follow-up actions to inform the development and implementation of the AIMS subcomponent of the IRI for Food Security and Nutrition in the SIDS.