



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# Terms of Reference of the FAST Partnership

*October 2024*



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

**FAST** Partnership

## Background

1. The world's agriculture and food systems, in short agrifood systems, are increasingly vulnerable to climate change. Evidence of the impacts of climate change on agrifood systems is growing worldwide and is more prominent in developing countries: rising temperatures, heat waves, droughts and floods, changes in rainfall patterns and extreme events affect agriculture more than any other sector. New pests and diseases appear where they were previously unknown. All these effects reduce yields, cause damage, and induce changes in land suitability for agriculture. Ultimately, climate change exacerbates the risks of hunger and malnutrition among the most vulnerable groups. In this context, with few years left until 2030, the urgency to address climate change is increasing.
2. Agrifood systems across the world offer a unique opportunity to address climate change from two perspectives. One, by building resilience across agrifood systems, their adaptation to climate change is ensured. At the same time, sustainable agrifood systems offer many opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Implementation of climate resilient and mitigating agrifood systems requires political will, international cooperation, generation and exchange of knowledge and best practices, as well as financial resources to support producers and value chain actors across the world to operate the necessary transformations. Recent assessments show that availability and access to climate finance at both farm and country levels remain largely insufficient and inaccessible.
3. During the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2023, the COP27 Presidency officially launched the Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation Initiative (the "FAST Initiative"). The COP27 Presidency and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) agreed that FAO would support the operationalization of the FAST Initiative through the establishment of the FAST Partnership, that would operate based on the [FAST concept note](#) developed after a consultation process held in Cairo, Egypt, in April and May 2022.

## I. Purpose and objective

4. The purpose of the FAST Partnership is to implement concrete actions that will result in improving the quantity and quality of climate finance contributions to transform agriculture and food systems by 2030, to support adaptation and maintain a 1.5-degree pathway whilst supporting food security and economic development. The FAST Partnership is meant to act as an accelerator to transform agrifood systems to deliver triple wins: for people, for climate and for nature. The FAST Initiative is designed as a catalyst, building on ongoing global and regional initiatives and coalitions to drive effective actions, and avoiding duplication.

## II. Guiding principles

5. The activities supported by the FAST Partnership should be guided by the following principles:
  - Ensuring that the food security dimension and the diversity of agrifood systems are considered.
  - Empowering and engaging women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and people in vulnerable situations.
  - Ensuring the best available science and innovation are considered, including local knowledge and practices.
  - Promoting a holistic vision, considering the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals for trade-offs and synergies, to unlock the entire potential and needs for more sustainable agrifood systems.
  - Promoting peer-to-peer exchanges.
  - Ensuring wide and balanced stakeholder engagement, including scientific, financial, and civil society partners alongside governments.
  - Ensuring flexible engagement of member countries, according to their interests, priorities and needs.
  - Coordinating and collaborating with on-going global and regional initiatives and partnerships to maximize synergies and avoid duplication of efforts.

## III. Nature

6. The FAST Partnership is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder, collaborative coordination mechanism facilitated by FAO. It is not a decision-making body. It also does not have a separate legal personality, and each member of the FAST Partnership is a separate and distinct entity.

7. Within the context of delivering its constitutional mandate, FAO will assist in coordinating and facilitating the activities of the FAST Partnership to achieve the objectives set out in these Terms of Reference (TORs), in accordance with the regulations, rules, policies and procedures of FAO.

## IV. Membership

8. Membership in the FAST Partnership is open to FAO Members, Associate Members and Member Organizations and other applicants from the following sectors:
  - a) UN entities and Specialized Agencies, intergovernmental global and regional organizations;
  - b) international and regional financial institutions;
  - c) philanthropic foundations;
  - d) civil society organizations, farmers' organizations, and Indigenous Peoples, and
  - e) universities, academia, and research institutes.
9. FAO will make decisions on membership. Applications for membership must be submitted to FAO through the application form made available on the [FAST webpage](#).
10. Members of the FAST Partnership should adhere to the FAST Initiative guiding principles, as set out in paragraph 5 above.
11. Each Member of the FAST Partnership will appoint a high-level focal point and a technical focal point. Members will meet once a year, in person or virtually, to review progress and approve the yearly work plan.
12. Individuals cannot become Members in their own right, but they may be invited to participate as observers.

## V. Operating mechanisms

13. In order to achieve its objective, the FAST Partnership relies on assistance from FAO within the context of delivering its constitutional mandate and three main elements: (i) a Board and up to three co-chairs, (ii) Working Groups, and (iii) Members of the FAST Partnership.

### (i) FAO assistance

14. FAO, under its mandate and institutional framework, and within its programme of work and budget and the limits of available resources, provides operational and administrative assistance to the FAST Partnership, in accordance with FAO's policies and procedures.

### (ii) Board and Co-chairs

15. The Board is responsible for the strategic orientation of the FAST Partnership, engaging and mobilizing all FAST Partnership Members towards common goals. The Board will also provide regular oversight, adjustments to the FAST Partnership activities when considered necessary by the Board, and assistance in securing funding, including to support FAO in the provision of its assistance, as described in these TORs.
16. Board Members are appointed by the co-chairs on proposals by FAO for a term of two (2) years, twice renewable for a maximum of six (6) years. The composition of the Board will consider gender, sectoral and geographic balance.
17. The Board shall include:
  - two (2) to three (3) co-chairs representing the current and incoming COP Presidencies;
  - up to two (2) past or identified upcoming COP Presidencies representing the two other Regional Groups of the UNFCCC;
  - up to eight (8) FAO Members, Associate Members and Member Organizations representing developed and developing countries, with due regard to geographical balance, including at least one (1) representative from a Small Island Developing State;
  - up to five (5) FAST Partnership donors; and
  - One (1) intergovernmental organization (IGO), including UN agencies;
  - Seven (7) non-state representatives, representing the following:
    - four (4) civil society organizations (CSOs), including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with a preference for women and youth;
    - academia and research institutes;
    - farmers' organizations; and
    - Indigenous Peoples.
18. The initial composition of the Board will be decided by the co-chairs on a proposal by FAO.

### (iii) Working Groups

19. Working groups and their expected outputs will be established at the inception meeting. Members of the FAST Partnership will explore ways to build working groups that may be articulated around the following option:
  - one working group for each of the three pillars of the FAST Initiative;
  - other potential permanent or ad-hoc thematic working groups may be established to address relevant issues identified by Members of the FAST Partnership.
20. The working groups will be composed of experts with adequate technical expertise proposed by the Members and confirmed by the Board and FAO. Each working group will elect at least one (1) focal point as rapporteur to the Members and to the Board. There is no limit to the number of experts, within due regard to geographical and gender balance.

## VI. Communication with stakeholders

21. FAO will work with the Board to develop an internal communications strategy to enable ongoing multi-directional dialogue between Members, Board and working groups. It will also develop an external communications strategy to provide regular updates on its priorities, work plan(s) and meetings, and generate support for the work of the working groups and any other endorsed activities.

## VII. Financial implications

22. Each Member of the FAST Partnership may contribute in-kind or financial resources towards the successful implementation of the FAST Partnership Workplan. The FAST Partnership requires the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources. Contributions to the FAST Partnership are of a voluntary nature. All contributions will be subject to FAO regulations and rules, including its cost recovery policies.

## VIII. Amendments to the TORs

23. Any amendments to these TORs will be subject to the approval of FAO following consultations with the Board and the co-chairs.

FAST - for people, for climate, for nature  
#FASTPartnership



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