

175th Session of the Council

Written Correspondence Procedure – inputs from Members - English version

Item 7 – Update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative

Member Name	Comments
Costa Rica (Thursday, 23 May 2024 – 14.59)	<p>Costa Rica values the information provided in document CL 175/INF/6 on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and appreciates the growing number of countries joining it. We also appreciate that the Initiative is now open to all countries to implement concrete measures to transform food systems. We support measures, programmes, or initiatives that promote the true eradication of poverty, reduce inequality, and enable genuine social inclusion through tangible opportunities that reach vulnerable populations.</p> <p>As part of the Regional Initiative for the Dry Corridor within the framework of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, Costa Rica will continue working with the other participating countries, as well as with FAO and the Secretariats and Councils of SICA (Central American Integration System) that lead the process. Our country values the current collaboration with the yearly Investment Forum, which allows for negotiations with investors to provide financial support to the initiative. In this regard, we support ongoing negotiations with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to continue the Initiative.</p> <p>Regarding paragraph 53, Costa Rica wishes to note that during the last FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC 38) held in Guyana, our country participated in the meeting where investments using the World Bank’s Multiphase Programmatic Approach were discussed.</p> <p>In this respect, we call on FAO to continue its technical cooperation under this Initiative and to support all countries that need it, regardless of the income parameters used by the agency, in order to achieve the Initiative’s objectives.</p>
New Zealand (Friday, 24 May 2024 – 14.41)	<p>[New Zealand] appreciates the update on the Hand in Hand (HIH) initiative. Of particular interest is the uptake of HIH in the Southwest Pacific (SWP). We note that Vanuatu is in the early stages of the process and Tuvalu is intending to attend and present at the HIH Investment Forum in 2024. We look forward to further insights on the development of these initiatives in the SWP region. We ask if, as part of the HIH work in country, these Pacific countries will also be upskilling/ capacity building in statistics and data that can assist the wider regional issues of data paucity and capacity shortages in these important areas.</p> <p>We note the reference to HIH working in synergy with multiple other corporate initiatives such as the 1000 Digital Villages, One Country One Priority Product (OCOP), etc and that synergies are also being explored around the preparation of Common Country Analysis (CCA) in selected countries. We would appreciate an update as to whether any countries of the SWP are part of the synergy work with CCA?</p>

<p>United States of America (Friday, 24 May 2024 – 15.17)</p>	<p>The United States thanks FAO for the update on the Hand in Hand (HIH) Initiative. We appreciate FAO's responsiveness to Member State comments on this initiative, including increased transparency through regular updates, further rollout of the communication strategy, and efforts to upgrade the HIH dashboard. The United States supports evidence-based, data-driven decision making and appreciates FAO efforts to bring data to the forefront of FAO and policymakers' decisions.</p> <p>We support FAO efforts to expand the donor base for HIH, noting recent pledges from the private sector, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and governments. We are interested to hear more from donors and beneficiaries regarding the value they find in the HIH Initiative. We encourage FAO to include this information in the dashboard and in other fora, as appropriate.</p> <p>Concerning the HIH dashboard, we appreciate FAO's efforts to improve the user experience based on ongoing feedback; however, we note that there is limited ability to interact with the site. Some of the links are non-existent (e.g., Tanzania Mission highlights), some go to blank pages (i.e., clicking the “\$3.4 Billion” topline of the 2024 Investment Forum), while others go to excellent comprehensive investment plan pdfs (e.g., Zimbabwe). Overall, the site is coming along since the last Council, but does not seem fully functional. While the current iteration is not able to provide regular, real-time reporting of progress against program milestones and Sustainable Development Goals objectives, we encourage FAO to continue improvements to the site ahead of the 2024 Investment Forum.</p>
<p>Brazil (Friday, 24 May 2024 – 17.08)</p>	<p>Brazil appreciates the information on the update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative contained in document CL 175/INF/6. We note the positive reference to the increase in the overall number of countries participating in the initiative. Brazil values the ongoing efforts to provide detailed updates on investments by country. We would like to suggest that more aggregate data on investments be made available. The effort to provide more accurate data on the HIH results could be mentioned in item (d) of the suggested actions by the Council.</p>
<p>Philippines (Tuesday, 28 May 2024 – 13.10)</p>	<p>The Philippines thanks the FAO for the update on the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative and appreciates its support as the Philippines begins its engagement taking account of HIH tools and approaches. The approach will be helpful in highlighting the country's evidence-based investment plans in agriculture and in detailing opportunities that have the highest potential to reduce poverty and hunger.</p> <p>The Philippines looks forward to presenting some of its priority investment areas in the upcoming HIH Investment Forum in Rome on October 15-17, 2024.</p> <p>The Philippines sees participation in this initiative as one that can help boost its current efforts to generate further investments that the public sector can support towards acceleration of its agri-food systems transformation – for decent, improved and sustained livelihoods, incomes and food security for all those who rely on the agri-food value chain, fostering reliable access to sufficient quantity of affordable and nutritious food for all, at all times, especially those in the most vulnerable situations.</p>
<p>Australia (Tuesday, 28 May 2024 – 22.14)</p>	<p>Australia appreciates this update on the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative.</p> <p>We note the continued growth in the number of countries participating in the HIH and welcome FAO progressing a regional project to support and explore how to enhance engagement on investments with national banks and partners, complementing regional investment partners in Asia and the Pacific region.</p>

	<p>We encourage FAO to continue to identify and maximise potential partnerships and investment opportunities, particularly in the Southwest Pacific region.</p> <p>We further welcome that FAO is responding to partner feedback by emphasising climate smart investment, and we encourage FAO to centre sustainability in investment practices.</p> <p>Australia recognises the ongoing development and upgrading of the programming dashboard and support the shift to partially automate data collection and support developments to improve user experience. We continue to urge presentation of timely information that allows users to understand the results and impacts of the HIH Initiative, as well as efforts to address existing issues with functionality of the dashboard.</p> <p>Finally, we note the upcoming HIH Investment Forum in October and look forward to hearing more about its planning and anticipated participation.</p>
<p>European Union (Friday, 7 June 2024 – 17.19)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am honoured to write to you on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States. 2. Albania, Georgia, Iceland, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, San Marino and Türkiye align themselves with this statement. 3. The EU and its Member States take note of the latest progress report on the Hand- in-Hand Initiative (HIH Initiative) and welcomes increased interest from LLDSs and SIDS, and opportunities expanding South-South and Triangular cooperation. This initiative complements the core activities of the Organization, further contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals within FAO's mandate. 4. We would like to recall the continued importance of ensuring the coherence of the HIH Initiative with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the joint programming of the UN development system, and the 2030 Agenda. To achieve this, we encourage FAO to continue to closely coordinate its work on the Initiative with other relevant UN agencies and development partners, in line with its mandate. 5. We take note of the increase in demand for support through the HIH Initiative and Geospatial Platform, innovative tools, and approaches. We look forward to the further development of these tools and the improved availability of detailed data for each region, country and initiative. We also acknowledge the ongoing improvements in the HIH Dashboard and request FAO to continue upgrading this dashboard, as well as other information products. 6. We thank FAO for providing a detailed update on the outcomes of the 2023 Hand- in-Hand Investment Forum (HIH IF). 7. We would like to recall the importance of aligning the Initiative's private funding with the CFS Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment and FAO's Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021-2025. In addition, continued attention should be given to ensuring that the Initiative has no further impact on the regular FAO budget as approved and outlined in the 2024-25 Work Programme and Budget. 8. Finally, we underscore the importance of capacity-building and welcome the Initiative's specific focus on this matter. Continued collaboration with relevant technical divisions of FAO and capacity-building activities remains essential to the future of the HIH Initiative.