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منظمة  
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# COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

## Twenty-eighth Session

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### Update on the FAO Strategy on Science and Innovation

*Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:*

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## I. Background

1. The FAO Science and Innovation Strategy (the Strategy) was endorsed by the FAO Council at its 170th Session following an inclusive and transparent consultative process.<sup>1</sup> The Strategy is a tool to accelerate the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 (SF), and hence to contribute to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

2. The Strategy was developed with the participation of all Members through formal Governing Body sessions (including all Regional Conferences in 2022), as well as six informal consultations. The Strategy aims to bolster recent developments that have strengthened FAO's work on science and innovation by providing organization-wide guidance, coherence and alignment on science and innovation to strengthen FAO's capacities to better serve Members.

## II. Relevance to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31

3. Science and innovation serve as a foundation for the SF and have cross-sectoral relevance across the Organization's programme of work. Innovation is considered a central driving force for achieving a world free from hunger and malnutrition. Innovation and technology are two of the four accelerators in the SF that speed up progress and maximize efforts in meeting the SDGs and realizing the aspirations of the *four betters* (*better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*). At the same time, science underpins all four accelerators [technology, innovation, data, and complements (governance, human capital, and institutions)]. As such, science and innovation are integrated throughout the 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs),<sup>2</sup> the accelerators, crosscutting themes and regional initiatives.

## III. Recommendations of the FAO Regional Conferences

4. The Regional Conferences welcomed the development of FAO's first-ever Science and Innovation Strategy as a key tool to contribute to the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, and underscored its cross-sectoral and cross-cutting relevance across the Organization's work.<sup>3</sup> The transparent and inclusive consultation process through which it was developed was commended. They highlighted that while science and innovation are critical for agrifood systems transformation, innovations needed to account for national circumstances and stressed the importance of considering the different contexts and priorities of Members in each region, including national and local specificities. They stressed that science and innovation are powerful drivers for improving agrifood systems and that attention should be paid to under-represented groups, including small-scale producers, Indigenous Peoples, women and youth.

## IV. Relevance to the work of the Committee on Agriculture

5. Recent sessions of the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG) have had a strong focus on innovation.<sup>4</sup> Through its three pillars and eight outcomes, the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy responds to the Committee's related recommendations, including through:

- a. strengthening linkages between research, extension and farmers;
- b. promoting access of smallholders and family farmers to technology and agricultural innovation, resources, investment, financing, and decision-making;

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the 170th Session of the FAO Council (Rome, 13-17 June 2022), Appendix D.

<https://www.fao.org/3/nj485en/nj485en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> FAO. 2021. *Medium-Term Plan 2022-2025*. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/ne576en/ne576en.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Reports of the Regional Conferences are available at <https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/en/>

<sup>4</sup> Report of the 25th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (<https://www.fao.org/3/mr949e/mr949e.pdf>), Report of the 26th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (<https://www.fao.org/3/my349en/my349en.pdf>), and Report of the 27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (<https://www.fao.org/3/ne021en/ne021en.pdf>).

- c. promoting an enabling environment for agricultural innovation;
- d. strengthening capacities to innovate at country level; and
- e. promoting public-private partnership.

6. In addition, the work of the Committee is rooted in science. The Strategy's focus on strengthening science- and evidence-based decision-making supports the Committee in performing its functions, and will provide opportunities for strengthening the science-policy interface.

## V. Summary of main elements of the Strategy

### *Vision*

7. A world free from hunger and malnutrition, where the potential of science and innovation is fully leveraged to overcome complex social, economic and environmental challenges of agrifood systems in a globally equitable, inclusive and sustainable manner.

### *Goal*

8. Members harness science and innovation to realize context-specific and systemic solutions for MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### *Scope*

9. The FAO Science and Innovation Strategy covers all sectors and areas of agrifood systems, including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture. The full range of scientific disciplines (e.g., the natural, social, and economic sciences) are considered relevant, as well as sustainability science, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, to address systemic challenges in a holistic manner. FAO recognizes the need for a diversity of innovations [technological (including digital), social, policy, financial, and institutional] to contribute to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, including the knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples and small-scale producers.

### *Guiding principles*

10. The Strategy is based on the following guiding principles: Rights-based and people-centered; Gender-equal; Evidence-based; Needs-driven; Sustainability-aligned; Risk-informed; and Ethics-based.

### *Pillars and outcomes*

11. The Strategy focuses on three pillars:

- a. strengthening science and evidence-based decision-making;
- b. supporting innovation and technology at regional and country level; and
- c. serving Members better by reinforcing FAO's capacities

12. Action under the pillars will be catalysed by two crosscutting enablers: transformative partnerships and innovative funding and financing.

### *Accountability framework*

13. Monitoring of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy will be fully aligned with the causal results chains and SDG targets established in the Strategic Framework 2022-31, ensuring that the Strategy supports the achievement of the SF's goals. The technology and innovation accelerators will be monitored through the relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPI), and activities under the PPAs will be measured through the most relevant SDG indicators. Reporting on the Strategy will take place in line with the established corporate reporting processes, including through the Mid-Term Review and Programme Implementation Report.