**<u>179th Session of the FAO Council</u>**

**Item 6: Update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative**

The Council, at its 168th Session (CL 168/5), requested the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to provide regular updates on the progress and results achieved in the implementation of the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative.

As of the end of October 2025, 80 governments have joined the HIH Initiative as full members, with additional countries engaging or adopting the Initiative's innovative tools and approaches, such as the Geospatial Platform. Following the HIH Investment Forum held in 2024, several Members have organized national-level Investment Fora, reporting nearly USD 9 billion in government-led agrifood investments that are either committed or under negotiation since 2022.

A major milestone was reached in October 2025 with the convening of the fourth edition of the HIH Investment Forum, during which 31 countries and six Regional Initiatives presented their investment plans to a global audience. These presentations represented a total investment request of USD 17.2 billion, covering 118 investment cases and targeting 159 million planned beneficiaries. Two new Regional Initiatives, African Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Pacific SIDS, were launched during the 2025 Forum.

The HIH Matchmaking mechanism continued to expand, with over 624 bilateral meetings requested by investors with participating Members and Regional/Subregional Initiatives during the Forum. The updated online Matchmaking App, launched in June 2025, now allows investors to connect with HIH members throughout the year.

Human capital development remains at the core of HIH support. The HIH team, in collaboration with FAO's Geospatial teams, has organized multiple specialized trainings for Members, reaching 2276 participants to date. These trainings covered Geographic Information Systems, advanced socio-economic analysis , and the Ex-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-ACT). Based on investor feedback from the 2022–2024 Investment Fora, HIH also supported three regional training workshops across four regions on the FAO open-source EX-ACT tool during 2025.

At the 2025 HIH Investment Forum, an expanded HIH booth showcased FAO's integrated "One FAO" approach, featuring the Geospatial/Agro-informatics Platform, HIH typologies, the EX-ACT carbon accounting tool, the Land and Water Management platform, Artificial Intelligence applications and Virtual Reality tools. The booth attracted more than 1500 visitors.

The HIH webpage has been significantly expanded, now featuring a News section, media coverage of follow-up events from 2023 and 2024, and national investment fora. Several HIH country success stories were also produced as videos, available on the HIH webpage and showcased at the Opening Ceremony of the 2025 HIH Investment Forum.

The development of the HIH Dashboard has also advanced, improving data quality, automation and interactivity through a new global visualisation and monitoring system designed to facilitate user access and analysis.

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