Web Annex 3:

Update on the Science and Innovation Forum, and FAO's leadership and collaboration to repurpose food and agricultural support to transform agrifood systems

Update on the FAO Science and Innovation Forum

1. The first-ever Science and Innovation Forum was held from 17 to 21 October 2022 at FAO headquarters, highlighting the centrality of science, technology and innovation for agrifood systems transformation. It showed the latest developments in science and innovation and explored scientific advances to speed up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The event, gathering world-leading science and innovation experts, encouraged a diversity of perspectives based on science, thereby facilitating rationalization and inclusiveness of debate.

2. The Science and Innovation Forum 2022 was organized together with the World Food Forum (WFF) and Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum as three distinct yet interlinked and aligned tracks. The Science and Innovation Forum Informal Steering Committee was chaired by FAO's Chief Scientist and comprised of renowned scientists and technical experts. It provided thought leadership and acted as an advisory board to oversee the development of the Forum's programme, which was diverse and addressed major policy, scientific and educational challenges, and solutions and opportunities to transform agrifood systems. It facilitated in-depth dialogues amongst current and future thought leaders, policy makers and scientific experts.

3. The objectives of the FAO Science and Innovation Forum were to (i) Share robust science and evidence-based options for more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems; (ii) Assist countries in making informed decisions regarding the co-creation, adaption and adoption of appropriate and context-specific technologies and innovations; (iii) Explore scientific and technological advances and associated risks and opportunities; (iv) Promote effective science communication, including by engaging on contentious issues; and(v) Analyze options for strengthening science and evidence-based decision-making.

4. The specific outcomes were that more than 300 invited scientists, policy makers, development professionals, civil society organization representatives and FAO Members presented and explored the recent advances in science and innovations and shared the experiences with over 10 000 participants who joined virtually and nearly 2 000 participants who joined the forum physically at FAO headquarters and at the regional offices. The forum consisted of 39 sessions between 17 and 21 October 2022, which included UN Chief Scientists' roundtable, a high level Ministerial session, 10 special events, 6 thematic events, 10 main stage events and 8 parallel events and interactive panels, which analysed the options to promote science and evidence-based decision making. In addition, over 95 side events were independently organized virtually between 12 and 14 October 2022 by academia, research institutes, international organizations including UN agencies, civil society organizations, and public and private sector institutions representing all regions.

5. The themes of the forum sessions were closely aligned to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy, which shared evidence-base related to transformative power of science, science communication, science-policy-society interface, investments in research for development, data science and data use, One Health, Blue transformation, science and innovation for connecting forests and people, sustainable livestock sector transformation, food loss and waste, soil and plant nutrient management, healthy diets and climate action for more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. The special events showcased the outcomes of FAO's partnerships with national research systems and demonstrated concrete actions at the regional and country level to support informed decision-making.

6. An exhibition organized during the forum had showcased the methods and laboratory techniques with a virtual tour of FAO-International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) joint centre's research facilities, and videos and publications featuring the work of the Tropical Agriculture Platform and Digital Services Portfolio. The key messages from the forum, video messages from

experts, video interviews with the scientists and pictures from the forum were communicated through news articles, stories, Flickr albums, tweets and other social media channels which reached over 12 000 users during the week of the forum.

Repurposing food and agricultural support to transform agrifood systems

7. The latest updates of the food security and nutrition situation around the world presented in the 2022 edition of *the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)* show that we are not on track towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) – the goal of eradicating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. World hunger rose further in 2021, a year in which between 702 and 828 million people faced hunger. Beyond hunger, more than 2.3 billion people in the world lacked access to adequate food in 2021 and almost 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2020. The persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies such as conflicts and climate crises are threatening progress towards achieving SDG 2.

8. More than ever, agrifood systems transformation is a necessity to get us on track towards the achievement of SDG 2. However, the current recessionary context is making it very challenging for governments to support and invest in agrifood systems transformation. FAO has been analysing how governments support the food and agriculture sector to understand how to make better use of their public budgets.

9. Public support to food and agriculture is not a new issue for FAO. For several years, FAO has been a member of the Ag-Incentives Consortium – an International Organisations Consortium for Measuring the Policy Environment for Agriculture, which aims at raising the quality and coverage of public support measures around the world. To this end, it collaborates with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). However, only until more recently has public support for food and agriculture been placed high up on the global agenda.

10. FAO is playing a leading role in this global discussion. In 2021, FAO led the report "A multi-billion-dollar opportunity – Repurposing agricultural support to transform food systems", which it co-published in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). This report was a turning point. It showed that farmers were mostly individually targeted by agricultural support and received USD 540 billion yearly, on average, in the 2013-2018 period. A significant share of this support was distortive and environmentally and socially harmful. Hence, the report called for action at country, regional and global levels to phase out the share of harmful support in order to redirect it towards investments in public goods and services for agriculture, such as research, development, and infrastructure.

11. Several studies and reports followed after the FAO-UNDP-UNEP report. While these reports have provided important policy insights for repurposing support efforts, they mostly focused on impacts on climate and the environment, and less on the extent to which repurposing public support would really contribute to lowering the cost of nutritious foods and increasing the affordability of healthy diets.

12. To bridge this knowledge gap, FAO once again took the lead and published, in close collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), the 2022 edition of *the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)* with the theme "Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable". SOFI 2022 shows a more complete picture: worldwide support to food and agriculture accounted for up to USD 630 billion per year on average over 2013-2018. Producers take the lion's share of all this support globally – about 70 percent. About USD 111 billion were spent yearly by governments for the provision of general services to the sector, while food consumers received USD 72 billion on average every year. Most of the support producers get is through price incentives, including border measures on imports and exports (such as import tariffs, quotas, export taxes, bans or licensing, etc.) and market price controls (administered prices at which governments procure food from farmers, or minimum producer price policies).

13. SOFI 2022 also shows the pathways through which current support to food and agriculture is pushing up the relative cost of nutritious foods and promoting unhealthy diets. It provides guidance on alternative combinations of food and agricultural policy support that can help to reduce the cost of nutritious foods, as well as on how the resulting trade-offs can be managed to ensure agrifood systems are not only more efficient, but also more inclusive, resilient and sustainable. It advises that repurposing of trade measures and fiscal subsidies will need to consider countries' commitments and flexibilities under the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Policy makers will also have to ensure that farmers do not face resource constraints to specialize in the production of nutritious foods. To avoid penalizing farmers and production, governments will need to step up fiscal subsidies to consumers, not move subsidies from producers to consumers. In the lower income countries, governments, with the help of international development finance, will have to spend more on a well prioritized provision of general services (including research and development, infrastructure, and so forth) to bridge productivity gaps for producing nutritious foods and enable income generation through agrifood systems transformation, making healthy diets less costly and more affordable.

14. FAO is now moving from the global recommendations to providing policy support at country level. Its Monitoring Food and Agricultural Policies (MAFAP) programme has started to support governments in eight sub-Saharan African countries to make better use of their public support and resources in order to accelerate agrifood systems transformation in ways that also help increase the affordability of healthy diets. In the case of Ethiopia, for example, FAO has recently shown that a reallocation of the existing budget to make it optimal would increase agrifood output, where over 2.3 million more Ethiopians would be able to afford a healthy diet, almost 500 000 jobs would be created, and 450 000 Ethiopians would be lifted out of poverty. Resource mobilisation will be needed for FAO to be able to increase the country coverage in providing this technical support.