

## CONCEPT NOTE OF THE FAO LAC REGIONAL INITIATIVES FOR THE CONSULTATIONS

Preparatory period for the 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

### GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE CONSULTATIONS

The FAO Regional Conference, held biennially, is the main governing body of the Organization at the regional level. Participants include a wide range of ministries relevant to FAO's mandate, including agriculture, health, social development, the environment, education, and planning. During the Conference, plenary sessions are held at the ministerial level, where regional and global policy and regulatory issues, programs, and the Organization's performance in the region are addressed, among other matters.

Member States will analyse how the activities carried out by FAO in 2020-21 have complied with the guidelines and recommendations received in the previous Regional Conferences, as well as the results achieved in the biennium 2020-21. In addition, the Regional Conference is expected to make recommendations on FAO's priorities for 2022-23 and beyond.

The Regional Conference is the culmination of a process that involves the analysis of decisions taken in the previous conference, preparatory dialogues in the countries on the topics to be discussed and regular meetings between the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) and FAO.

The list of participants includes the 33 Member States of the region, the Holy See, specialized agencies and agencies of the United Nations System, intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, private sector organizations, academia, observers and non-member States, and the FAO Secretariat. By decision adopted by the Member States of the region, the 37th session of the Regional Conference will be held in Quito, Ecuador, from March 28 to April 1, 2022. It will be a hybrid Conference, where the Ministers together with another member of their Delegation will participate in person, while the rest of their team will participate virtually in their country of origin.

In line with the orientations of FAO Director-General Dr QU Dongyu, a dynamic version of the Conference is planned, including discussions with multiple actors, aimed at finding political and practical solutions in a participatory manner. The Regional Conference will be the space for the location of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and will give the possibility to the Member States to dialogue on its implementation.

As part of this process, the FAO Regional Office is organizing a series of preparatory Consultations for LARC37 that will be held virtually. The objective of these consultations is to share the proposals of the FAO work programme in the region for the next biennium and listen to comments and suggestions to enrich the programme document that is under development.

The FAO proposal is related to the Regional Initiatives, identified as topics of particular relevance during the previous Regional Conference and developed from consultations and inputs collected from Member States and FAO partners. They are also aligned with the FAO's new Strategic Framework and consider the current state of the pandemic in the short term, and the need for the transformation of agri-food systems in the medium to long term, according to the context, priorities and capacities of each country.

The summary of the three Regional Initiatives is presented below:

## **I. SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS FOR HEALTHY DIETS FOR ALL**

In 2020, the prevalence of undernourishment in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) reached 9.1%, the highest in the last 15 years. Between 2019 and 2020, the prevalence of hunger in the region increased by two percentage points, which could be partly explained by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that, in 2020, 60 million people in LAC suffered from undernourishment, which is 14 million more than in 2019. In addition, in 2020, the prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity reached 41% of the population in LAC, up by nine percentage points from 2019. This means that, as of 2020, 267.2 million people in the region were moderately or severely food insecure.

The prevalence of overweight among children in the region continues to increase, reaching 7.5% in 2019, above the world average of 5.6%, while 59.5% of people over 18 years of age were overweight, which is more than 20 percentage points above the world average. Obesity in people over 18 affects almost a quarter of adults, which is also well above the world average of 13.1%.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of the high cost of healthy diets in the world, 113 million people in LAC in 2019 could not afford a healthy diet. Only Africa and Latin America showed an increase in the unaffordability of healthy diets between 2017 and 2019.<sup>2</sup>

Through the Regional Initiative 1, Sustainable agri-food systems to provide healthy diets for all, and considering the various sub-regional and national contexts and situations, FAO proposes to focus its efforts on four main objectives:

### **1. Contributing to reverse hunger and increase food security and nutrition through:**

- a) The design and implementation of plans, programmes, policies and legal frameworks of Food Security and Nutrition (FSN)
- b) Increasing and improving the FSN data
- c) The development of nutrition-sensitive social protection mechanisms

### **2. Ensuring physical and economic access to safe and nutritious foods to achieve healthy diets through:**

- a) Technical assistance towards reducing the cost of healthy diets
- b) Policies and programmes to increase physical and economic access to nutritious and healthy food
- c) Reducing food loss and waste (FLW)
- d) Promoting food safety standards

### **3. Supporting policies and programmes to reduce overweight, obesity and diet related NCDs through**

- a) Fostering a multisectoral approach to tackle overweight and obesity
- b) Policies and laws to enhance food environments for healthy diets
- c) Dialogue and inclusion of the different sectors and actors of the agri-food systems and the communities in developing, distributing and marketing healthier food products

### **4. Promoting agri-food trade through**

- a) Generating and sharing evidence for more and better trade
- b) Supporting institutional capacity development and training
- c) Trade and global markets promotion of small and medium-scale family farmers and agri-food small and medium enterprise

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<sup>1</sup> FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2020. Panorama of food security and nutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean 2020. Santiago, Chile. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb2242en>

<sup>2</sup> SOFI 2021 <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb5409en>

## **II. PROSPEROUS AND INCLUSIVE RURAL SOCIETIES**

FAO's programme "Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies" will support countries in facing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural livelihoods and help to promote, strengthen and transform rural economic activities to build productive, innovative and inclusive rural societies. To this end, the programme will focus on four main areas:

### **1. Protecting rural livelihoods**

The increase in poverty and extreme poverty has put lives at risk, created conditions for social and political instability and hindering the achievement of SDGs 1, 2 and 10 in the region. Given that poverty affects half of the rural population, designing and achieving the conditions for the transformation of the agri-food system is a complex task, particularly in a context of reduced public spending. In this regard, FAO will provide technical assistance for the design of coordinated and inclusive policies through:

- a) Improving coherence and coordination between social, economic and environmental policies to protect livelihoods and increase resilience
- b) Developing evidence for policymaking, particularly regarding the impact of productive and social protection programmes on food security and nutrition, rural poverty, irregular migration, agro-climatic resilience and economic inclusion of the poor and vulnerable
- c) Assisting in the design and implementation of cost-effective interventions, particularly cash transfer programmes, nutrition and gender-sensitive rural livelihoods programmes, input transfers and productive assistance
- d) Providing support to improve land access and land tenure and natural resources rights – particularly for indigenous people, small farmers, rural women and youth.

### **2. Increasing productivity and expanding rural economic opportunities**

Rural economic activities in the region can significantly increase productivity and generate decent, better-quality employment. FAO will support Members to improve their rural information and communication systems (ICT), including their governance mechanisms, to make science, innovations and digital technologies more accessible to family farmers and increase investments to accelerate economic recovery and expand rural opportunities, by:

- a) Increasing productivity through science and innovation
- b) Fostering decent rural employment
- c) Enhancing medium and small-scale family farmers and fisheries' access to credit, markets, and natural resources
- d) Strengthening social capital and rural economic governance

### **3. Fostering equitable rural societies through the economic inclusion of rural women, youth, indigenous peoples and People of African descent**

Rural inequalities generate political, economic and social instability, increase the costs of economic and social policies and encourage migration, as well as reduce economic opportunities and the demographic viability of rural communities. In this regard, FAO will support Members of the region to improve the access of historically excluded and marginalized populations to rural services, markets and assets, in order to reverse social and economic exclusion, including:

- a) Expanding economic inclusion, employment, income and empowerment of rural women and youth,
- b) Expanding development opportunities for indigenous peoples and People of African Descent

### **4. Supporting the implementation of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative**

Participants in LARC36 supported the Hand-in-Hand Initiative as a mechanism to promote effective cooperation between developed and developing countries in order to achieve SDGs 1 and 2. FAO will continue to implement the initiative in the region, providing the instruments and cooperation mechanisms needed to support priority investments by the countries in areas with a high incidence of poverty and food insecurity and high agricultural potential.

### **III. SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT AGRICULTURE**

Given the impacts of Climate Change and the consequences of the condition of ecosystems health over agri-food systems, and the lives that depend on them, FAO proposes to focus its efforts on three main objectives to promote more sustainable and resilient agriculture in the region:

#### **1. Building agri-food systems that are better adapted to climate change and more resilient**

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need to boost the resilience of agri-food systems to cope with multiple economic, social, and environmental shocks and stresses. Comprehensive multi-risk management approaches across the agri-food systems will include preparedness and early action to mitigate the impact of disasters and crises, as well as reducing the cost of emergency response and reconstruction. Supporting innovative agri-food systems that address climate change adaptation while also increasing productivity remains a priority of FAO in the region. FAO will provide support to strengthen the climate change adaptation and resilience of agri-food systems through:

- a) Scaling up practices for climate change adaptation
- b) Adapting to a drier future: sustainable and efficient water management.
- c) Acting early ahead of systemic multiple hazards and threats
- d) Prevent and control animal, zoonotic and plant diseases and pests

#### **2. Enhancing ecosystem services and biodiversity for better production**

Healthy and biodiverse ecosystems are essential for agri-food systems, livelihoods and nutrition. Considering opportunities provided by the United Nations Decade on Ecosystems Restoration (2021-2030), FAO will support Members to advance in the following:

- a) Mainstreaming biodiversity into agri-food systems
- b) Tackling land degradation and soil health
- c) Strengthening aquatic ecosystems and the communities that depend on them
- d) Sustainable forest management

#### **3. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions of agri-food systems**

Agri-food systems' are solution providers to reduce GHG emissions and meet NDCs. FAO will continue to provide support in:

- a) Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD +),
- b) Reducing agri-food systems emissions
- c) Carbon sequestration through soil recarbonization

Additionally, FAO will continue its work to increase access by all countries in the region to environmental and climate financing, working and partnering with multilateral and bilateral resource partners and donors, catalysing investments from the private sector and international financial institutions. FAO will also continue to support the Platform on Climate Action in Agriculture (PLACA), a regional mechanism for voluntary collaboration amongst Ministries of Agriculture of the region.