



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

The background features a vibrant blue sky with a field of green corn plants in the foreground. Overlaid on this are several concentric green circles and an orange line graph with four data points, suggesting growth and data analysis.

Annual report on private sector engagement 2022

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, 2023

Required citation:

FAO. 2023. *Annual report on private sector engagement 2022*. Rome.

<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4586en>

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Foreword

The past year has seen great progress in FAO's work with the private sector, marked by major strides in the quality of our engagements, as well as a greater acceptance across the Organization of the idea that there are many different ways to work with the private sector to create positive change.

The breadth of FAO's mandate in food and agriculture means that all forms of private sector engagement laid out in the [FAO Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021–2025](#) can play a role in helping us to transform agrifood systems. The same is true of all types of private sector entities with which we engage. From large private sector associations seeking to influence their membership to incorporate more inclusive and sustainable business practices, to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) looking to boost their contribution to agrifood systems, to direct contact with farmers interested in capacity development, engagements with all types of private sector entities can be valuable. Taking into account the current global challenges, including food price hikes, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, war and conflict, working across sectors to find solutions has never been more urgent.

Continued efforts to equip all FAO employees with the tools and skills to build successful engagements helped the Organization to create a more diverse portfolio of private sector engagements during 2022. The Resource Mobilization and Private Sector Partnerships Division (PSR), the Project Support Service Division (PSS), the Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division (PSU), the Legal Office (LEG) and the Office of Communications (OCC) worked alongside regional partnership officers and a network of consultants to support FAO employees in both headquarters and worldwide offices in proactively engaging with the private sector. Consequently, FAO's work with the private sector expanded in terms of geographic coverage, thematic areas of engagement, and contributions to both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and FAO's Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) outlined in the [Strategic Framework 2022–2031](#).

Improved data collected from across FAO's operations shows that our private sector relations continue to be dominated by informal engagements (90 percent of the portfolio), with the remaining 10 percent being formal partnerships. Both types of engagements helped to advance progress towards more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems during 2022, by providing support to knowledge and research, capacity development and technical assistance, and through scaling up investments for agrifood systems transformation, including through FAO's-Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative.

Such accurate facts and figures are available thanks to another major achievement of the past year: the addition of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to FAO's CONNECT Portal. Real-time information on FAO's engagement with the private sector is now logged, tracked and shared throughout the Organization, offering more accurate data and more effective management of engagements.

This report is testimony to the achievements of the many FAO staff, FAO Members, and private sector representatives who strive to work together for agrifood systems transformation and a better world. Moving into 2023, FAO will aim to further diversify its private sector relations, increase measurable impact, catalyse private sector investments for its Members, improve digital tools to manage and report on engagements, and create more opportunities for employee development.

I am proud to report that FAO is truly making great progress against the aims set out in the *Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021–2025*, and I am confident that as we build on lessons learned and prioritize new directions, 2023 will be a year of expanded and transformative private sector engagement for the Organization.



Beth Bechdol

Deputy Director-General

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Executive summary

Two years into FAO's *Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021–2025* and one year into FAO's new Strategic Framework 2022–2031, this annual report charts progress in terms of widening and deepening private sector engagements that contribute to agrifood system transformation and improved food security and nutrition. The experience of the past year demonstrates that the private sector is an important ally, especially in the context of present challenges that continue to disrupt agrifood systems and food supplies – including the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and climate change.

During 2022, guided by strong leadership from senior management, FAO took a more proactive approach to engagement and a more deliberate and transparent approach to its outreach. New tools allowed the Organization to collect more accurate data and take more strategic decisions in establishing new engagements. The CONNECT Portal was enhanced with a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system; design has begun on a mapping tool to identify the most promising private sector engagements; and a comprehensive capacity building programme was rolled out to all FAO employees.

The past year has also seen a greater focus on scaling up investments to support FAO's Members in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). FAO offices in all regions and in many countries have generated new relationships this year, focusing in particular on benefits for farmers and smallholders. More comprehensive data logged in the CONNECT Portal by year end 2022 showed that most of FAO's work with the private sector was done through informal engagements – globally, the Organization had 399¹ informal engagements and 44 formal ones.

A number of actions to accelerate agrifood systems transformation were in the spotlight in 2022. These included establishing a Women's Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Accelerator Mentorship Programme; leveraging engagements with associations to achieve economies of scale; catalysing investments in support of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative; and raising awareness about healthy diets. Important lessons learned during the year demonstrated that continued employee empowerment is key to leading private sector engagements; that it is vital to be proactive rather than reactive; and that if you can't measure it, you can't improve it!

Directions for the year ahead point to the need for FAO to continue to diversify its engagements to catalyse impact; attract targeted investments for food and agriculture; develop and promote FAO digital tools for managing engagements; and provide ongoing opportunities for FAO employee development.

¹ The exercise to record existing informal engagements on CONNECT Portal started in last quarter of 2022, and will continue in 2023. The actual number of informal engagements is expected to be much higher once data collection is completed.





Overview of FAO's expanding private sector portfolio



The private sector plays a key role in transforming agrifood systems, encouraging innovation and investment to make the food and agriculture sectors more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable. Throughout 2022, FAO continued to work with a wide variety of private sector entities to advance progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to support the Organization's Strategic Framework and Programme Priority Areas (PPAs). While the majority of FAO's private sector engagements remained informal,¹ these proved to be no less valuable at encouraging positive change within agrifood systems.

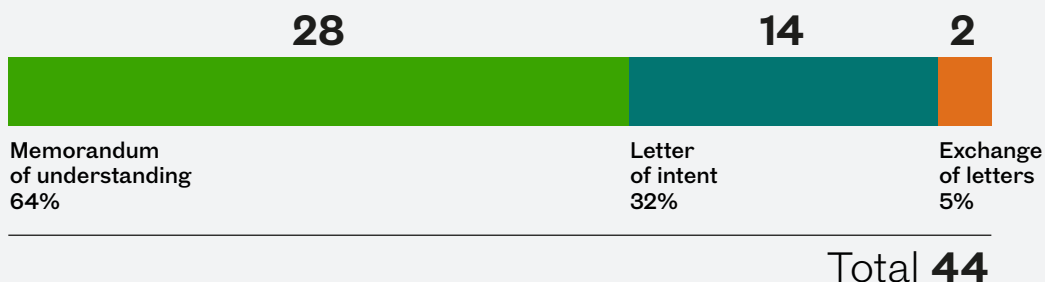
More accurate data and statistical analysis of FAO's private sector engagements was made possible in 2022 through the [CONNECT Portal](#), which was upgraded during the year to include a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The system offers FAO a systematic way to track details of all its private sector engagements – both formal and informal – across its operations worldwide. Current data suggests that informal engagements, such as informal discussions or jointly organized events, constitute the vast majority of the Organization's private sector relations – 90 percent – while formal engagements account for the remaining 10 percent.

¹ Not formalized through the signature of a legal instrument.

Formal engagements

FAO concluded 2022 with a total of 44 active formal engagements, compared to 40 in 2021 (FIGURE 1). Twenty-eight of these were formalized through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), 14 through Letters of Intent (LoIs) and two through Exchanges of Letters (EoLs).² These collaborations involved a broad array of private sector actors, ranging from micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), to industry and trade associations and consortia (FIGURE 2).

FIGURE 1 Formal engagements by legal instrument



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

FIGURE 2 Formal engagements by entity type

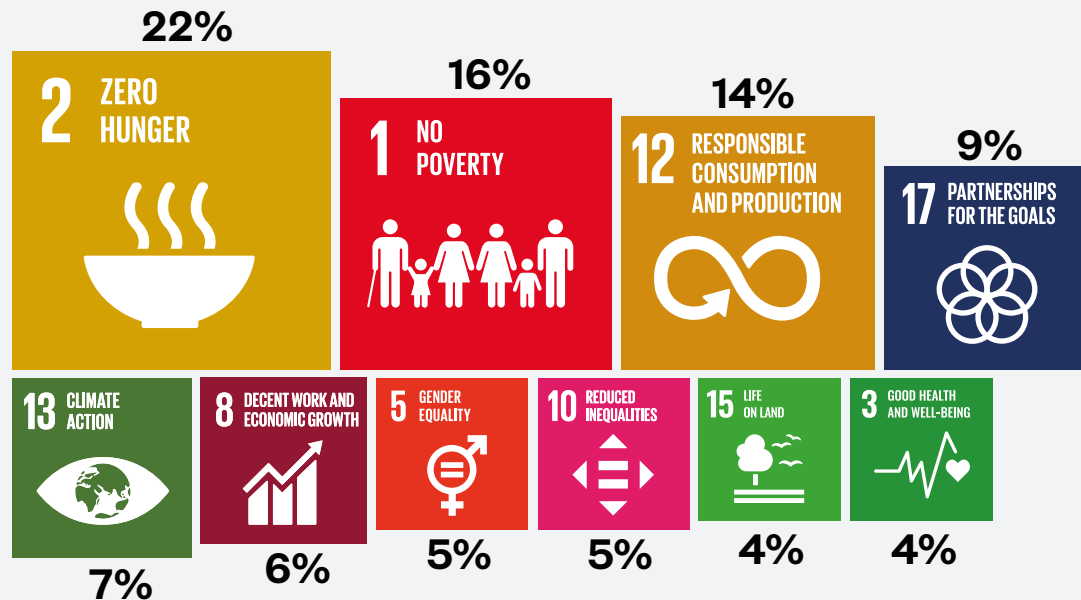


Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

² Exchange of Letters is a legacy legal instrument that is now being phased out.

Joint work with these entities in 2022 contributed to advancing progress towards multiple SDGs³ as seen in **FIGURE 3**, with over half the engagements contributing primarily to three SDGs: Goal 2: Zero Hunger, followed by Goal 1: No Poverty and Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production.

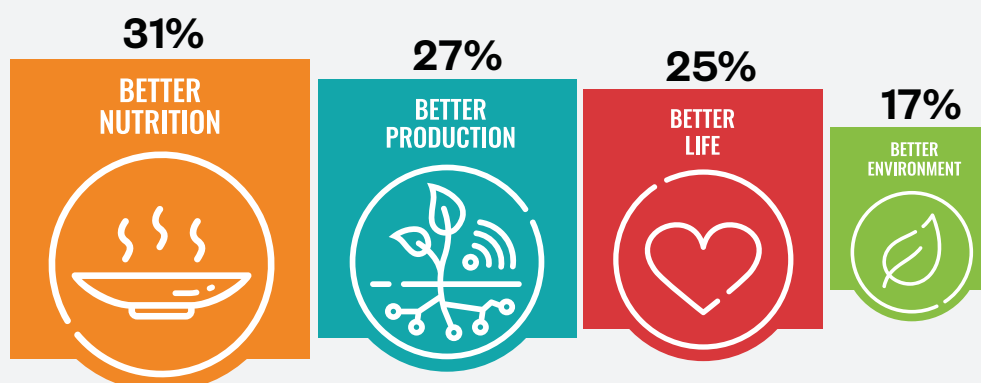
FIGURE 3 Formal engagements by contributions to the SDGs



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

Formal engagements also contributed almost equally to all of FAO's four betters – better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life (**FIGURE 4**) – as well as to all PPAs (**FIGURE 5**). Within the PPAs, private sector engagements chiefly contributed to BP1: Innovation for sustainable agriculture production, BN5: Transparent markets and trade, BE1: Climate change mitigating and adapted agrifood systems, BN4: Reducing food loss and waste, BN3: Safe food for everyone, and BP4: Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources.

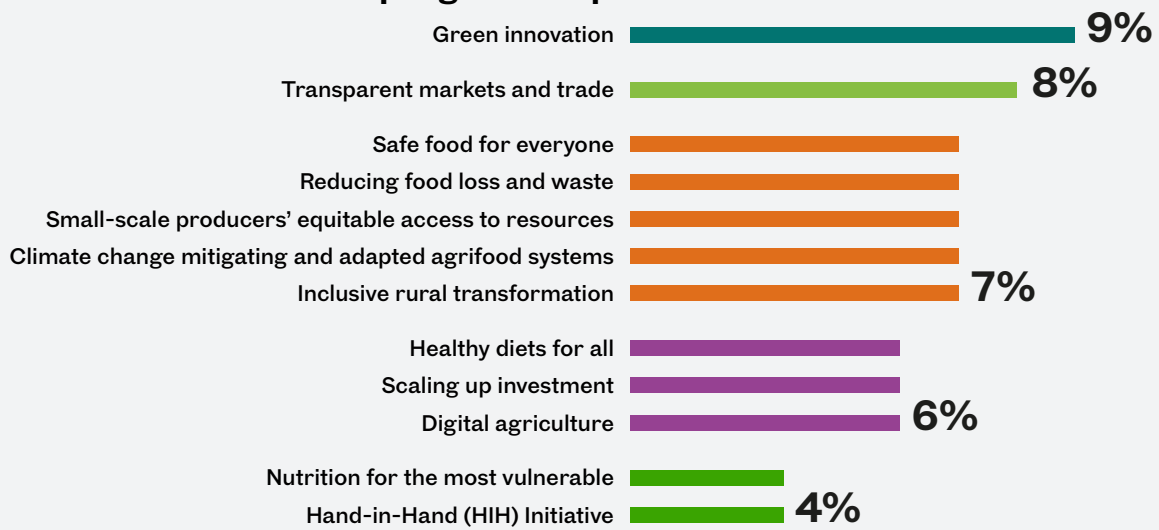
FIGURE 4 Formal engagements by contributions to FAO's four betters



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

³ Where an engagement contributed to multiple goals (e.g. SDGs, PPAs, or the four betters) a percentage base is calculated as a total number of records registered which are considered contributions towards a relevant category. This provides visibility of the weight of the value of the engagement within the tracked category and allows FAO to monitor its portfolio balance within multiple-choice categories.

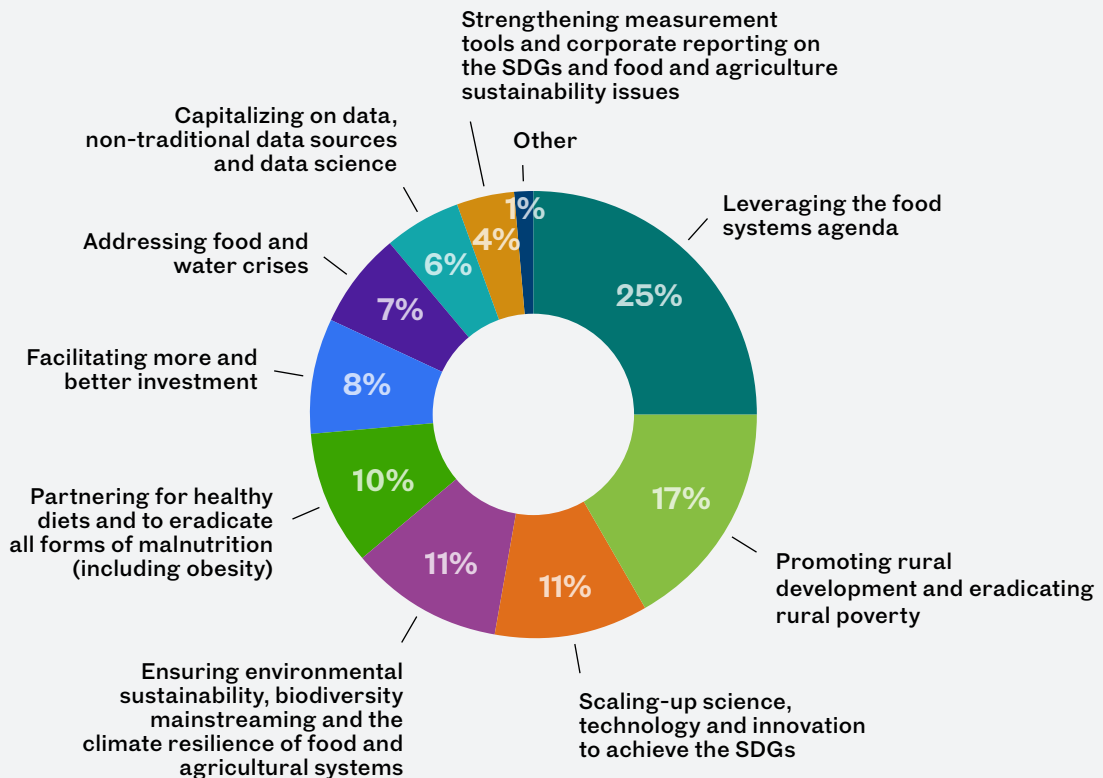
FIGURE 5 Formal engagements by contributions to FAO's programme priorities areas



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

Formal engagements demonstrated increasing alignment to the priority partnership areas that were identified in FAO's Strategy for Private Sector Engagement as new ways of working to help countries achieve the SDGs (FIGURE 6). In 2022, over half of FAO's formal engagements contributed to areas such as leveraging the food systems agenda, promoting rural development and eradicating rural poverty, and scaling up science, technology and innovation to achieve the SDGs.

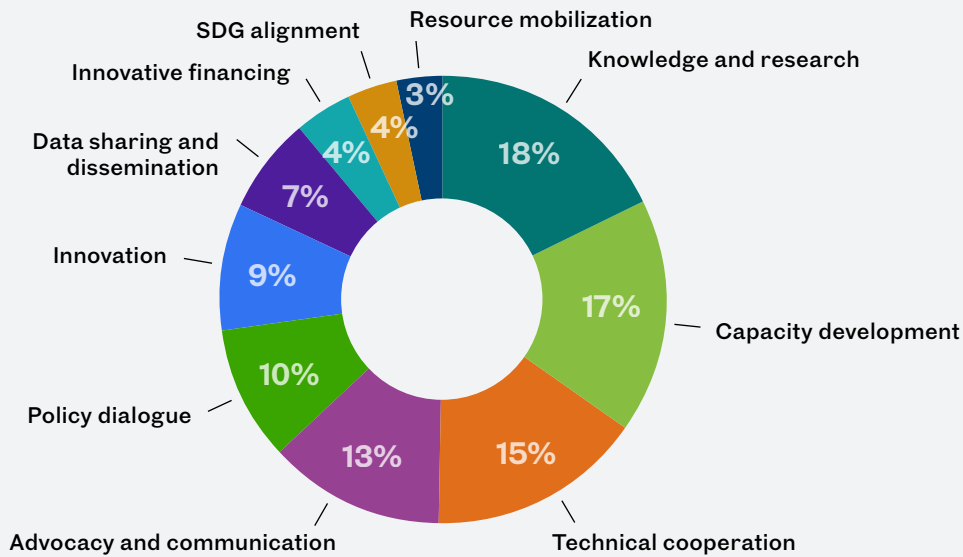
FIGURE 6 Formal engagements by priority partnership areas



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

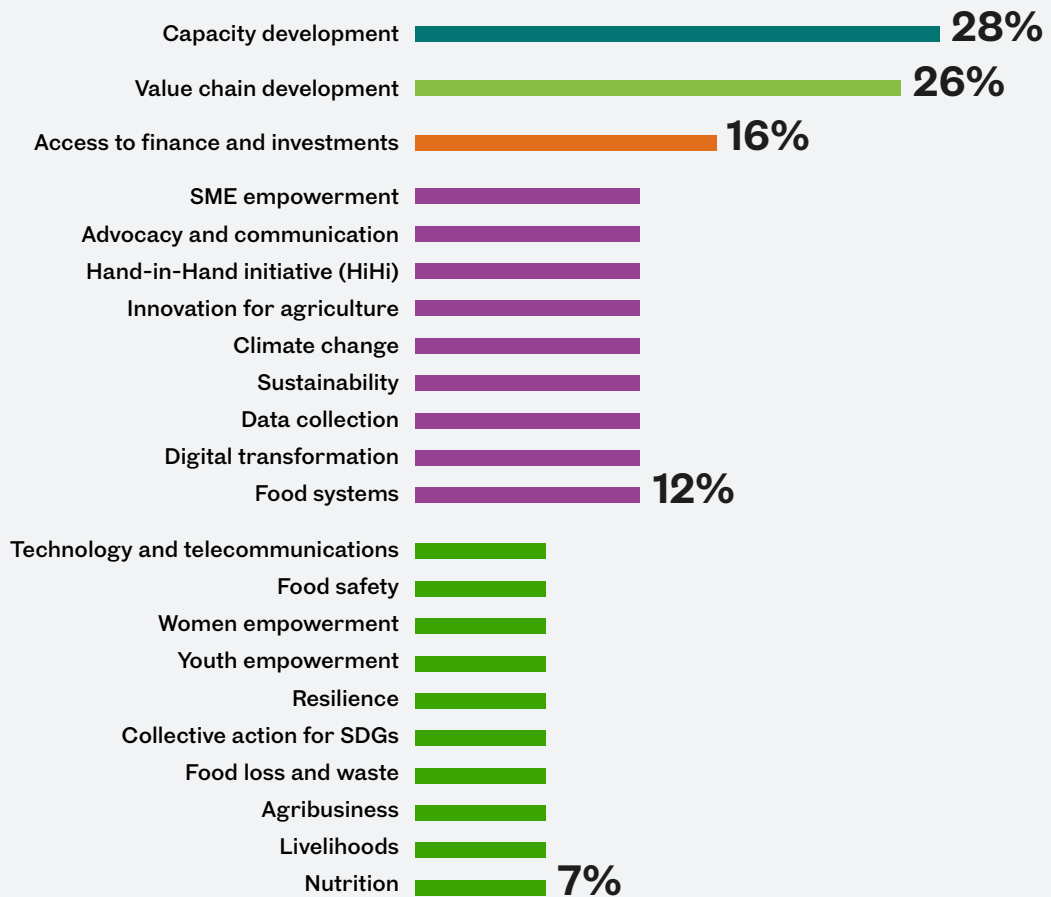
These engagements also became more diverse by entity type, structures of engagement and thematic area (FIGURES 7 AND 8). They covered a variety of thematic areas, primarily facilitating capacity and value chain development, access to finance and investment, SME empowerment, advocacy and communication, support to the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, and innovation for agriculture and climate change.

FIGURE 7 Formal engagements by engagement structure



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

FIGURE 8 Formal engagements by thematic area

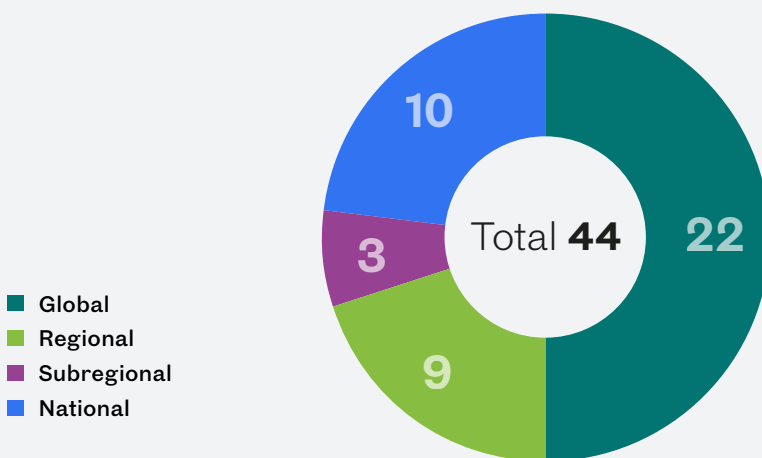


Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

Out of 44 formal engagements, the majority (22) had a global focus, while nine had a regional scope, three a subregional scope and ten a national focus (FIGURE 9). Many of the engagements benefitted least developed countries such as the Central African Republic, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, and Yemen; landlocked countries including Azerbaijan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia; and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including Maldives and Papua New Guinea.

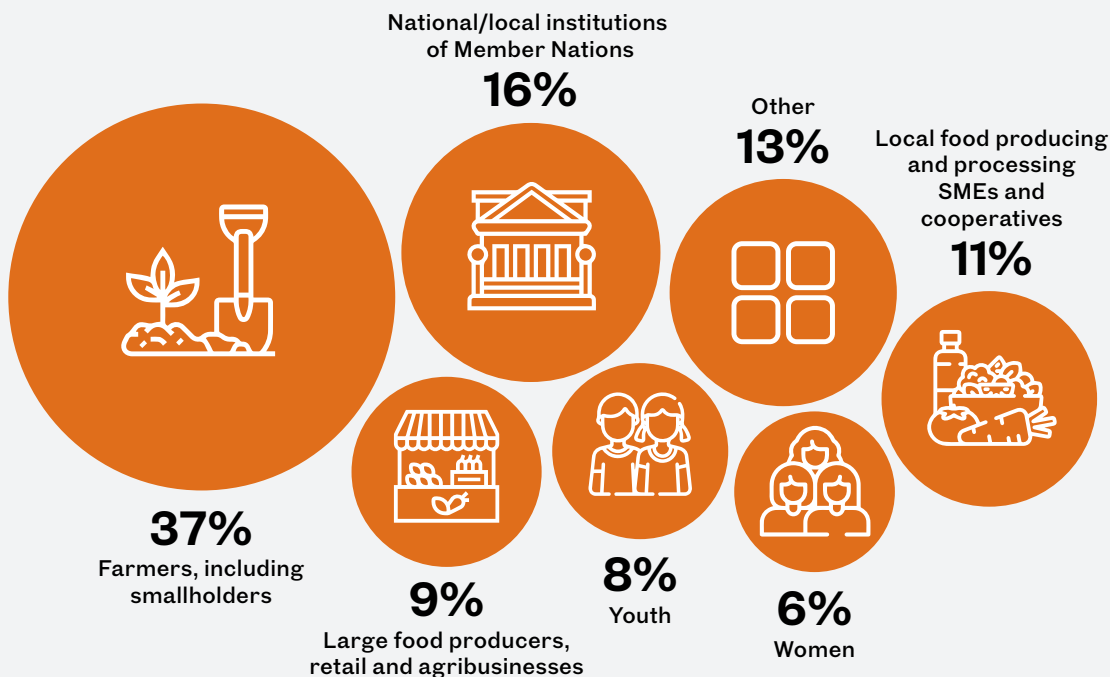
Farmers and smallholders, by and large, continued to be the primary beneficiaries of FAO’s work with the private sector (FIGURE 10), followed by national or local institutions of FAO Members, and local food producing and processing MSMEs and cooperatives. Six out of 44 partnerships specifically contributed to youth empowerment, and five to women’s empowerment.

FIGURE 9 Formal engagements by geographic scope



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

FIGURE 10 Formal engagements by beneficiaries

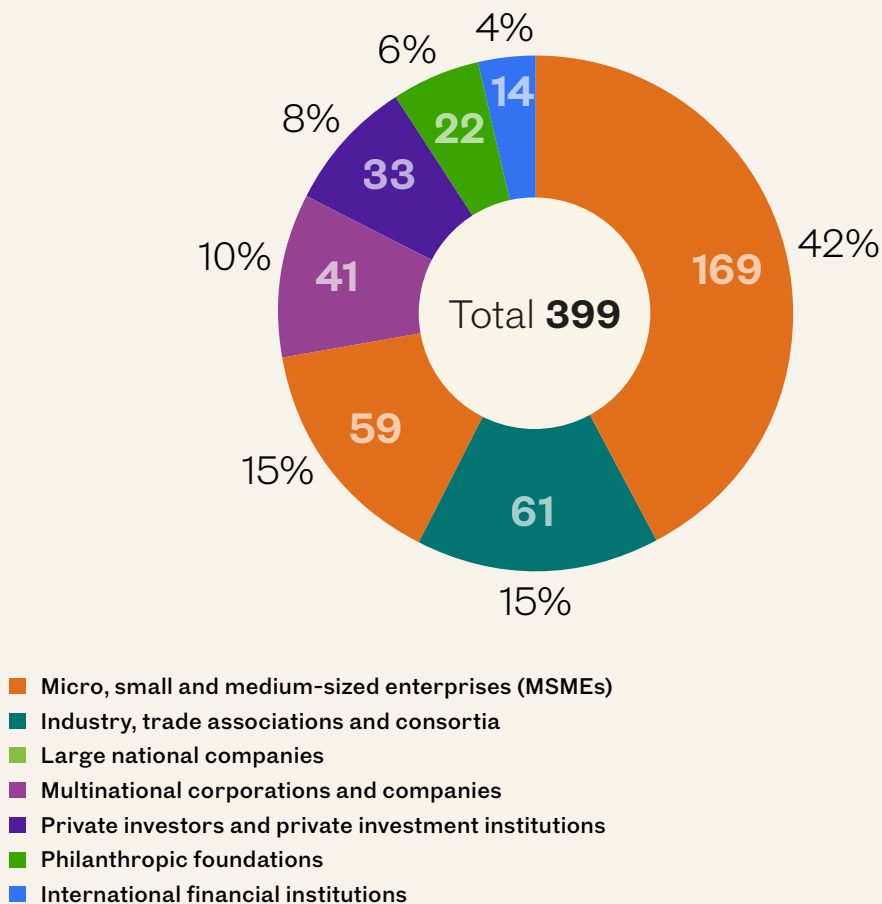


Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

Informal engagements

FAO closed 2022 with informal engagements with 399 organizations logged in the CONNECT Portal's CRM system. While comprehensive data collection on informal engagements is still ongoing and will continue through early 2023, the data collected thus far (shown in **FIGURE 11**) suggests that the largest number of informal collaborations in 2022 occurred with MSMEs (42 percent), followed by industry and trade associations and large national companies (15 percent each), and multinational corporations (10 percent). These engagements contributed to advancing progress towards various SDGs, with the biggest share contributing to Goal 2: Zero Hunger (25 percent), Goal 1: No Poverty (18 percent) and Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals (9 percent).

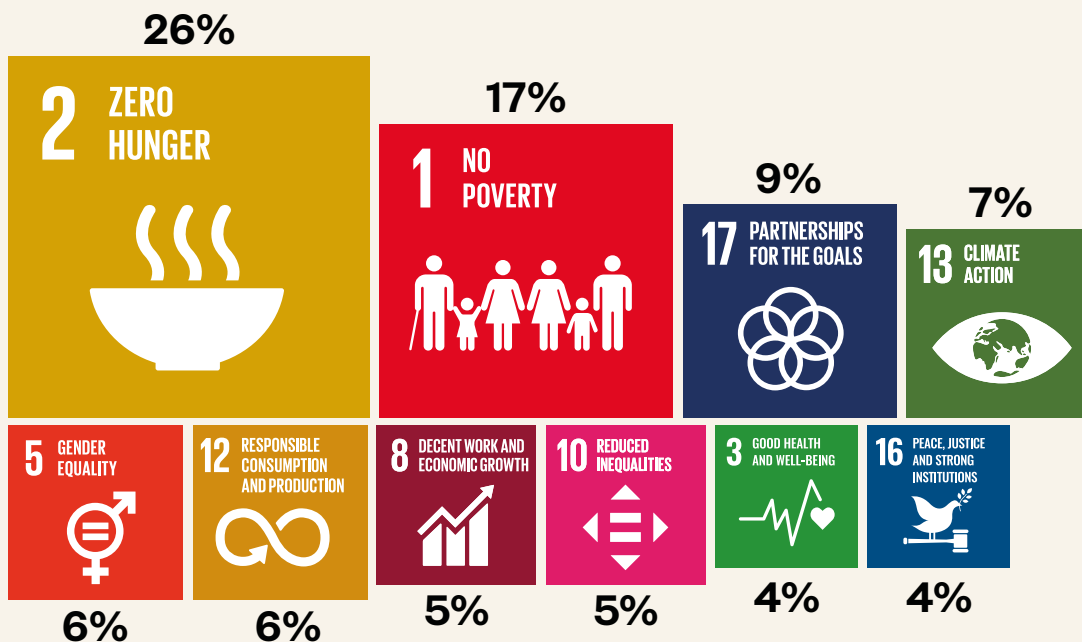
FIGURE 11 Informal engagements by entity type



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

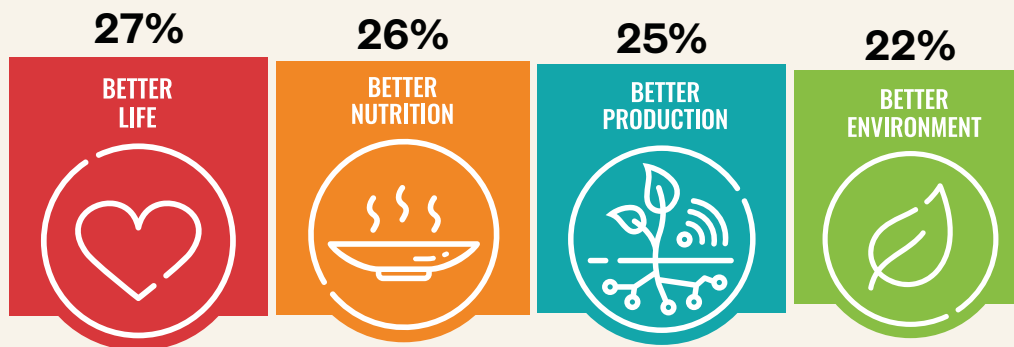
Informal engagements also contributed to all of FAO's four betters and PPAs (FIGURES 12, 13 AND 14), in alignment with FAO's Strategic Framework.

FIGURE 12 Informal engagements by contributions to the SDGs



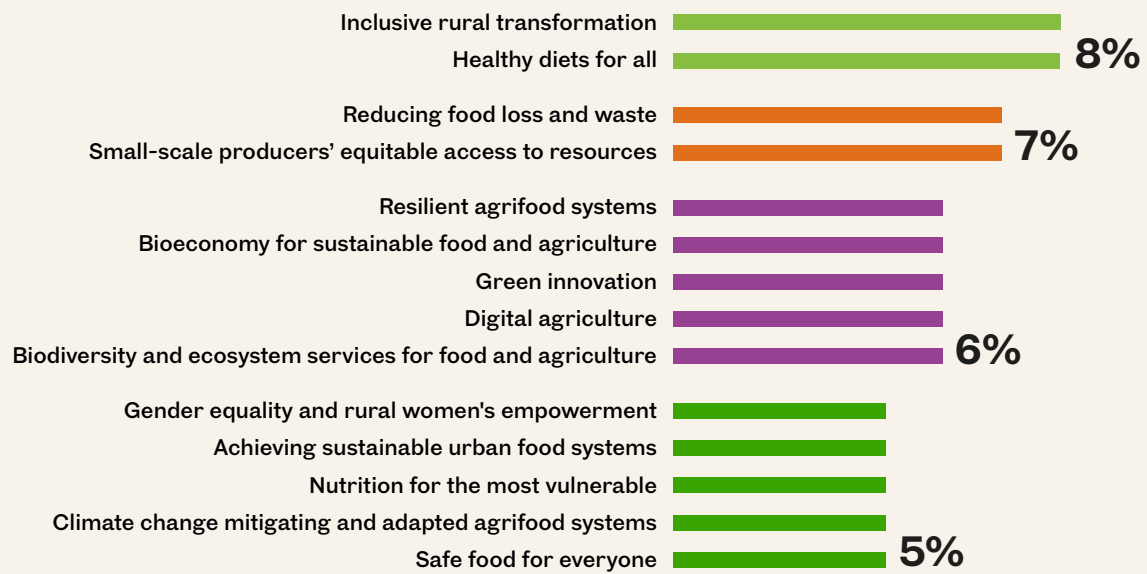
Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

FIGURE 13 Informal engagements by contributions to FAO's four betters



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

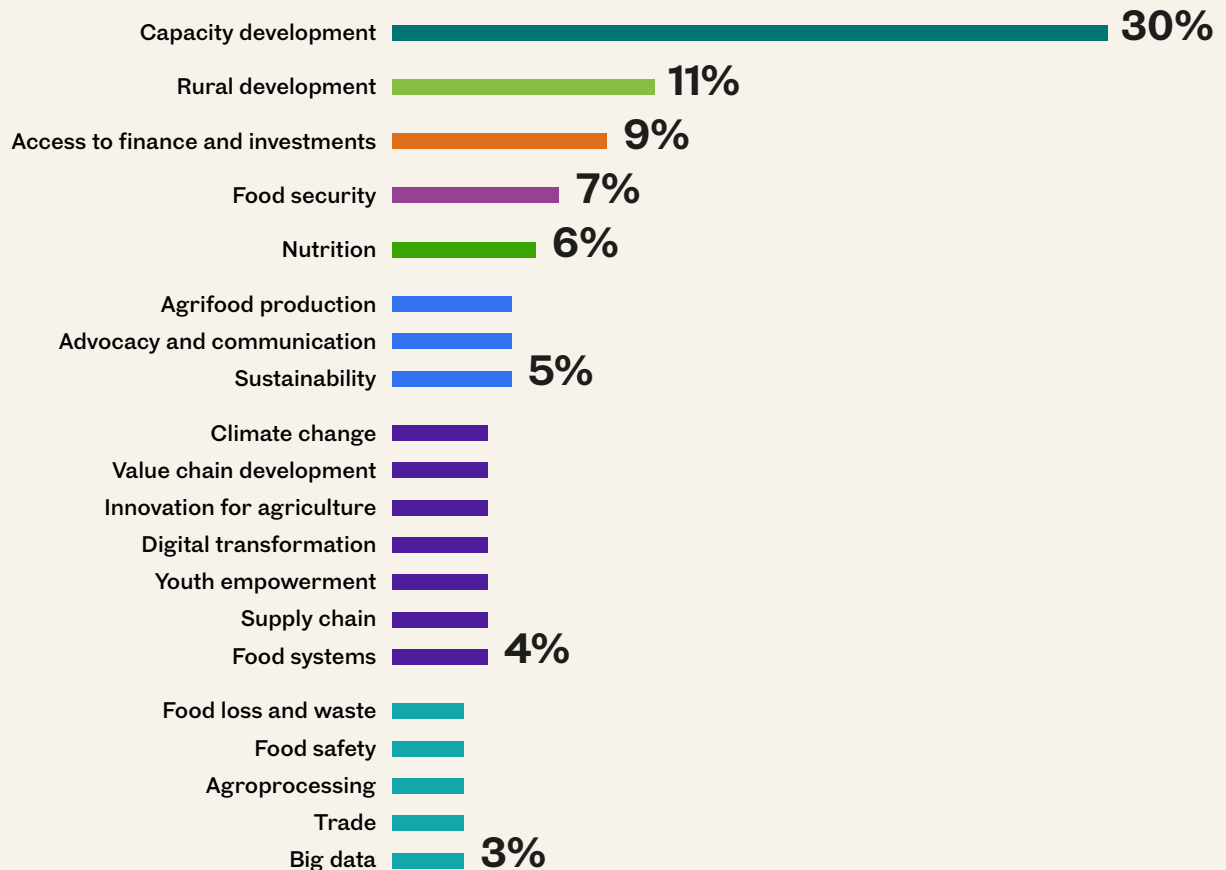
FIGURE 14 Informal engagements by contributions to FAO's programme priorities areas



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.

It is also important to monitor thematic areas as these provide additional detail on the expected impact of the engagement. These engagements focused predominantly on capacity development (30 percent), followed by rural development (11 percent), access to finance and investments (9 percent), food security, nutrition, and agrifood production (FIGURE 15).

FIGURE 15 Informal engagements by thematic area



Source: Author(s) own elaboration based on FAO CONNECT CRM database.



MISITU HONEY
LADHA ASHILIA
100% Natural Honey Harvested from
Ladha Ashilia, Kilimanjaro Region
PRODUCT OF TANZANIA
2023



Accelerating agrifood systems transformation

2

Throughout 2022, certain aspects of FAO's work with the private sector stood out for their potential to accelerate progress in transforming agrifood systems to make them more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable. These included investing in women as agents of change, working with private sector associations to encourage sustainable business practices, leveraging private sector investment to achieve the SDGs, and raising awareness about healthy diets.

Empowering women entrepreneurs

Women and youth have a unique potential to transform agrifood systems, and a particular focus area within FAO's private sector engagements over the past year has been on empowering these groups as agents of change. FAO works to support women and youth involvement in MSMEs, recognizing that this type of private sector plays a key role in rural development and economic growth worldwide. In October 2022, FAO and the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN) joined forces to launch an [Accelerator Mentorship Programme](#) for women-led SMEs in sub-Saharan Africa, a region with one of the highest rates of female entrepreneurship in the world.

Fifty women entrepreneurs from several countries across sub-Saharan Africa were selected to participate as mentees in the six-month programme, which will focus on helping them to grow their businesses and adapt to the demands of an ever-changing marketplace. Participants are paired with a mentor – a leader in their field who can share knowledge and experience – and receive one-on-one mentoring throughout the duration of the programme. Mentorship is complemented by online coursework developed by FAO, helping participants to deepen skills in business development, marketing and leadership, and reinforced by a series of expert-led workshops on selected topics, designed to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and networking. During 2023, FAO will monitor the initiative and gather lessons learned with a view to scaling up the programme across other regions.

Encouraging sustainable business practices

Private sector industry associations and umbrella bodies have a unique potential to catalyse and influence their membership to adopt sustainable business strategies and practices, encourage commitments, and facilitate investments in agrifood systems transformation. Engaging with associations is not only more effective, as it allows FAO to achieve economies of scale, but also carries a lower risk than engaging directly with the association's individual members, which may raise concerns about reputational risk, conflicts of interest or perceived preferential treatment.

In 2022, 43 percent of FAO's formal engagements were with industry associations and umbrella bodies. Over the course of the year, the Organization signed three new agreements with such entities. The first, with the International Chamber of Commerce, intends to promote responsible investment, sustainable strategies for agrifood system transformation, and facilitation of private sector engagement through strategic partnerships in national programmes. One with the World Economic Forum (WEF) focuses on using data and digitalization as tools to support inclusive, efficient, sustainable and healthy agrifood systems and increase investments, while another, with WEF on behalf of the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, aims to boost agrifood trade competitiveness in developing and least developed countries by supporting the introduction of electronic phytosanitary certificates.

Scaling up investments to achieve the SDGs

While the financial commitments needed to achieve the SDGs are calculated at USD 4 trillion per annum, Official development assistance (ODA), which stood at USD 180 billion in 2021, accounts for only 5 percent of what is required. This gap can be only closed with increased investments from the private sector.

As part of the solution, FAO launched the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative to mobilize support for the implementation of nationally-led, nationally-owned programmes to accelerate agrifood systems transformation by eradicating poverty, ending hunger and malnutrition and reducing inequalities. HIH prioritizes countries where national capacities and international support are most limited, or where operational challenges, including natural- or human-made crises, are the greatest.

With national governments in the driving seat, the initiative supports countries in mapping and targeting territories for agrifood transformation, using advanced geospatial modelling and analytics to identify where investments can have the biggest impact on alleviating poverty. The analysis forms the basis for attracting targeted partnerships and investments, including from the private sector, to close the gaps. Areas for investment include developing value chains for priority commodities identified by national governments, building agro-industries and efficient water management systems, introducing digital services and precision agriculture, reducing food loss and waste, and addressing climate challenges and weather risks.

As convener, matchmaker and a neutral broker, FAO brings together various stakeholders, including the private sector, around such priorities to mobilize support and operationalize national agricultural strategies and investments. The initiative engages partners based on their interest and ability to provide critical technology, data and information, capacity development, funding and financing.

FAO organized the HIH Investment Forum in October 2022 with the goal of bringing together key partners – including the private sector – to support action to achieve the SDGs. During the forum 20 countries presented their priorities for value chain investments to those in attendance and a much larger virtual audience. The private sector was represented at the forum by input and equipment suppliers, solution providers for improved access to climate financing, carbon credits, investment funds, banks and foundations (e.g. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation). Following the event, a number of private sector entities followed up through the Hand-in-Hand matchmaking approach to explore financing and investments in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Raising awareness

The International Year of Fruits and Vegetables was celebrated in 2022, and FAO partnered with DreamWorks Animation and the United Nations Foundation to raise awareness of the important role of fruits and vegetables in creating a happy and healthy planet. As part of a [global campaign](#), a short awareness raising video featuring DreamWorks' Trolls was launched in 2021 and was live through the end of 2022.

The campaign reached millions of viewers – it was seen more than 2.5 million times across all platforms, and through the DreamWorks TV Network, made available to some 26 million households. It garnered more than 70 thousand connections in 12 languages [on social media](#), and was viewed approximately 50 thousand times on the children's video sharing platform "[Zigazoo](#)", the world's largest COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act) certified social network for children. The campaign took over [UN's #ActNow website](#) and mobile app for three months, clocking 124 000 page views and helping to generate 453 000 climate actions.

This collaboration provided an excellent channel to raise awareness amongst consumers about the importance of healthy eating and reducing food waste. The colourful Trolls inspired young followers and their families to become "food heroes" by eating more fruits and vegetables (the more colourful and varied the better) and reducing food waste by choosing fruits and vegetables even if they look funny or different.



Regional perspectives

3

FAO's offices around the world continue to play an essential role in identifying private sector engagements that support regional- and country-level goals and priorities. Despite capacity constraints, the plethora of ongoing and new activities led by FAO's Regional and Country Offices in 2022 is testimony to their dedication.

AFRICA

FAO's Regional Office for Africa (RAF) has worked consistently to scale up investments in food and agriculture from the private sector, identifying investment gaps in areas where profitable opportunities exist but where the level of risk – real or perceived – has previously discouraged private investment. Advocacy for additional investments has focused on sending the message that the private sector can contribute to reducing poverty and improving levels of food security and nutrition while at the same time making a profit.

In 2022, FAO supported the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat and brought Trade Ministers and Agriculture Ministers together to discuss key issues related to agrifood systems transformation through intraregional trade. Building on this

momentum, FAO intends to bring the private sector to a series of policy dialogues in 2023 to further promote intraregional trade with innovation through a regional Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) with AfCFTA Secretariat.

With the 1 000 Digital Villages Initiative (DVI) successfully piloted across seven countries in Africa, FAO engaged private sector actors to enhance digitalization and the use of information and communication technology services in improving productivity, addressing market linkages and financial services, and ultimately supporting rural transformation. The past year also saw an increase in co-financing by private sector entities for Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposals, particularly in low-carbon and climate resilient agriculture and livestock (dairy) value chain development, and a growing interest for engagement in carbon credit generation, registration, certification and benefits for smallholder producers.

JR Farms: agribusiness training for youth

In Rwanda, FAO works with JR Farms, a leading agribusiness that works to make agriculture in Africa more sustainable and profitable, offering agribusiness training to youth involved in agriculture and access to equity funding through JR Farms' Green Agribusiness Fund (GAF) initiative.

Beginning in 2021, FAO joined JR Farms, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF) to deliver training tailored to Rwandan youth agripreneurs. Following the success of the programme, the initiative was scaled up as the "GAF Academy", and extended to cover Uganda and Nigeria. More than 80 youth were trained, before ten of them were selected to potentially receive equity funding from JR Farms. To complement the training sessions from the GAF Academy, a training programme for coaches on business formalization was designed to accompany young agripreneurs on their journey.

Youth in agribusiness training and access to equity funding continued in Rwanda during 2022, with series of training and capacity development to prepare the youth for screening prior to their selection for possible financing.



ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The Asia and the Pacific Region (RAP) boasts a large and dynamic private sector. Recent socio-economic and technological trends are reshaping growth patterns in Asia that have led to the rapid development of the service sector and digital economy. The private sector landscape continued to evolve during 2022, with prevailing trends of digitalization, innovation and innovative technology development, and a strong focus on increasing access to global markets.

FAO has seized opportunities to support food systems transformation objectives in the region, for example, in Green Transformation, an approach to transforming food systems which addresses issues including the depletion of natural resources, climate change, rapid urbanization and other challenges to sustainability, where the role of the private sector is pivotal. In RAP, private sector engagement focuses on financing for HIH priorities, innovations, digital transformation, One Health, inclusive value chains and capacity building, with a strong emphasis on informal engagements with the private sector and prioritization of impactful engagements that can deliver tangible results.

Guangfa Securities: equipping farmers with business know-how

In China, FAO works with Guangfa Securities, a leading Chinese securities company, to assist in implementing rural development strategies and supporting FAO's Farmer Field School Programme.

Since 2018, the collaboration has promoted rural revitalization and progress towards the SDGs through smart and green agriculture, and has helped to implement the SDG Villages Project – FAO's first project in China fully funded by the private sector – by providing comprehensive assistance to 16 pilot villages in rural China to promote digitalization and increase market access for rural communities. Through a Farmer Field Business School (FFBS), the project assisted farmers in rural areas in acquiring the necessary skills to improve the quality of their agricultural products and to find bigger markets for these products online. By December 2022, more than 300 tutors and 3 000 beneficiaries had been trained in e-commerce, branding for agricultural products, multi-dimensional solutions for controlling crop pests and diseases, protection of pollinators, and an overview of policies on farmers' cooperatives.

This project has developed blended and innovative instruments to pilot the "Internet + Agriculture + Finance" model and link farmers with markets for better income, offering a successful model of a multi-stakeholder effort to eradicate poverty and promote rural revitalization.



EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The private sector landscape in Europe and Central Asia (REU) offers many entry points for both informal and formal engagements. In 2022, the focus has been on developing and intensifying collaboration in certain geographic areas, such as central Asia, and with specific types of private sector – MSMEs. The number of engagements with the private sector in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Türkiye increased substantially during 2022. These included working with the Federation of Food and Drink Industry Associations of Türkiye to engage their members in advocacy and awareness raising initiatives to enhance women’s role in agrifood supply chains and to support cooperatives run by women refugees.

REU has numerous informal engagements, which include participation in events, meetings, and policy dialogues. The objectives of these engagements range from building consumer confidence in food systems (with Chui-sut in Kyrgyzstan), to creating market linkages between the private sector and farmers (with Carrefour in Georgia) and project activities leading to the development of the Organic Agriculture Law in Uzbekistan (with the Association of International Business and Technologies in Uzbekistan).

Agrarco LLC: improving efficiency and sustainability in hazelnut cultivation

In Azerbaijan, FAO works with Agrarco LLC, a leading agribusiness company, to support local producers in increasing efficiency and sustainability of hazelnut cultivation by accessing the technological innovations and processes applied by the company.

The collaboration introduced new initiatives to support hazelnut producers from the regions of Zagatala, Balakan, Gakh, Oghuz, Gabala and Khachmaz, resulting in 60 smallholder farmers receiving access to the technological innovations and processes applied by Agrarco.

During a three-day hands-on training, participants were able to benefit from Agrarco’s expertise in the field of agricultural production and had the chance to exchange experiences. Agrarco demonstrated techniques such as winter pruning and fungicide use in its own orchards, and highlighted the importance of these techniques for 60 demonstration site owners. An FAO expert participated in an additional demonstration on the preparation of compost from hazelnut husks and shared the importance of applying Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) during practical training sessions.



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Thanks to increased outreach by FAO's offices in the Latin America and Caribbean Region (RLC), 2022 saw a rise in both requests for formal private sector partnerships and the number of contribution agreements in the pipeline.

Private sector engagement helped to mobilize resources from private entities in support of FAO's Strategic Framework, with a focus on strengthening value chains and implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) measures. The private sector's increasing commitment to the triple bottom line (profit, people, and planet) aligns with FAO's aim to support countries to mobilize investments to achieve the SDGs, and represents a shift from the traditional concept of resource mobilization to scaling up investments to support development goals.

Both the 1000 Digital Villages Initiative, GCF, and Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects in the region actively involved private sector entities for better outreach and impact. The GEF portfolio in RLC grew to 35 projects, with the co-financing modality relying on the private sector to provide its own funds.

Juan Valdez Café: empowering rural producers' organizations

In Colombia, FAO works with Juan Valdez Café, an international coffeehouse firm headquartered in Colombia that specializes in coffee sales, to promote collaborative work, link remote and family farmers with wider markets, empower rural youth, and combat child labour in agriculture.

FAO Colombia, Juan Valdez Café and the Colombian rural development agency "Agencia de Desarrollo Rural" developed a project to include rural youth coffee producers' associations from two departments in Colombia in their programme RENACER, which procures coffee from rural youth producers. The coffee producers received training on good practices, agribusiness, responsible chemical usage, and irrigation, among other topics, and were supplied with grain dryers and a modern silo.

Several of the young coffee producers had been displaced from their land, so the project also functioned as an incentive for them to return home. Participation in the alliance with Juan Valdez led to an increase of sales of 78 percent during 2020 for the coffee producers, while the grain dryers reduced drying time from 10–15 days to five days on average, resulting in an approximate 155 percent performance increase per square meter of the coffee drying process.



NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

The Near East and North Africa Region (RNE) showed clear signs of expansion and growth in private sector engagements during 2022, with a large number of philanthropy and corporate social responsibility programs blooming. The private sector in the region has also demonstrated increased interest and involvement in achieving the 2030 Agenda and aligning its priorities to the SDGs. In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states specifically, the private sector has started building its own strategy for development.

One of the major challenges for engaging with the private sector in RNE is attaining and providing detailed information on how best to partner, and with whom. Political challenges also pose an issue as to how many countries can be brought to the same table. For these reasons, RNE aims to put in place a new structured campaign in 2023 to bring together a wider audience from all over the region to share experiences, plans and targets and areas for engagement, using three main locations – Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; and Doha, Qatar – as convening points.

In 2022, a private sector mapping exercise began in the region, which is expected to continue throughout 2023. Moving forward from a year that saw major events in the region, including COP 27 and the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and with a growing interest in public-private partnerships, 2023 should provide new entry points and new opportunities for impactful engagements with the private sector.

Elite Agro: improving resilience and food security for rural women and their families

Through a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership collaboration in the Gulf Cooperation Council, a USD 5 million tripartite agreement was signed in May 2022 with FAO, the United Arab Emirates' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC), and Elite Agro, a leading agricultural conglomerate in the region. Elite Agro engages in growing, sourcing, importing and marketing a wide range of high quality agricultural products through world-class technology and an effective distribution chain, with the most economic use of natural resources.

The engagement aims to increase resilience and guarantee sustainable income, food security and nutrition for rural women and their families in Liberia, where it is expected to benefit over 1 700 rural women in 26 communities in four main counties – Gbarpulo, Bong, Lofa and Nimba. It will support the participants in increasing their incomes, improving their food and security and nutrition, and developing and strengthening their skills and capacities to identify and develop alternative income generation activities, thereby improving resilience. The initiative serves as a successful example of how to involve the private sector in humanitarian activities with financing from governments.



ELITE AGRO
HOLDING



Supporting a proactive approach to private sector engagements



FAO's *Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021–2025* ushered in a new approach to engaging with the private sector, characterized by greater transparency and accountability across the engagement process, more strategic and proactive outreach, and improved monitoring and reporting for greater impact. This approach is supported by guidance from senior management, the creation of a fora for the exchange of experiences and ideas, and continuous capacity development for FAO employees.

Transparency and accountability throughout the engagement cycle

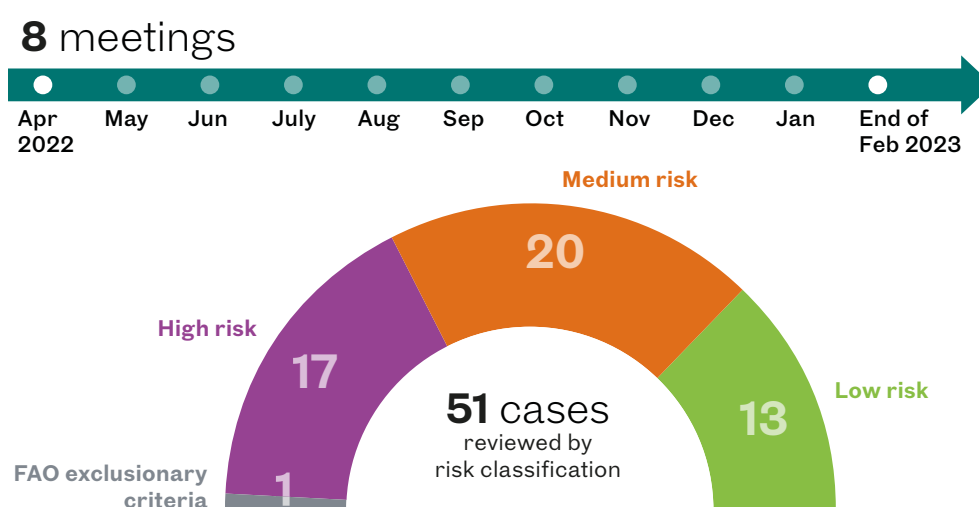
A fit-for-purpose due diligence system

In 2021, FAO developed a renewed and robust due diligence system – the Framework for Due Diligence and Risk Assessment/Management (FRAME) – aimed at safeguarding FAO's neutrality and independence while allowing the Organization to work closely with the private sector via a risk-conscious approach.

Throughout 2022, all proposed engagements were assessed against FRAME, with the Project Support Service Division (PSS) conducting independent due diligence screenings and risk assessments based on evidence. Key formal engagements were assessed by the Engagements and Partnerships Committee (EPC), which acts as FAO's ultimate decision-making committee and Secretariat.

In 2022, the EPC held eight meetings and reviewed 51 proposals for engagements. Of these, 13 were determined to be low risk, 20 medium risk, and 17 high risk, while one fell under FAO's Exclusionary Criteria. The majority of proposals reviewed by the EPC (84 percent) were endorsed. Some endorsements included conditions to strengthen the risk mitigation measures proposed. 16 percent of proposals were not endorsed by the EPC (FIGURE 16).

FIGURE 16 Engagements and Partnerships Committee (EPC), cases reviewed by risk classification



Source: Author(s) own elaboration.

A comprehensive resource for private sector engagement

FAO's CONNECT Portal, launched in April 2021, continues to serve as a one-stop-shop for information on the Organization's private sector engagements, providing more accountability for its work with the private sector. With information accessible in all six official FAO languages, the portal offers examples of successful joint work with the private sector as well as key opportunities for the private sector to engage with FAO to achieve impact on the ground.

In the past year, users from nearly 180 countries around the world visited the portal. In addition to the information available to the general public, FAO employees and Members can find more detailed information on specific partnership agreements via a password-protected gateway. FAO employees can also access a wealth of resources to support and guide them in engaging with the private sector, such as the Practical Guide on how to engage with the private sector, relevant forms and templates for use throughout the engagement cycle, e-learning courses, videos and training webinars, and additional resources to support the due diligence process.

In 2022, a CRM system was integrated into the portal, allowing CONNECT to offer a suite of engagement management tools and improved analytics.

Strategic direction and proactive engagement

Mapping for greater impact

To date, the formation of many of FAO's private sector engagements has been driven by private sector entities themselves. While these engagements are valuable, there is room to improve the way FAO identifies and forges purpose-driven partnerships. This entails better scoping of the private sector landscape and more accurate matchmaking of private sector strengths and potential value-add for FAO's work, in line with the Organization's Strategic Framework and regional and country-level priorities.

To this end, FAO began developing a mapping tool in 2022 to provide a clearer picture of the private sector in various locations and according to thematic interests, allowing the Organization to identify and build relationships with entities that will have the biggest impact. The mapping tool will become an integral part and a valuable upgrade of the [CONNECT Portal](#), providing a crucial support mechanism for proactive, effective and efficient engagement with the private sector.

Leading by example

FAO senior management continues to fully support the implementation of the Private Sector Engagement Strategy, providing oversight on a regular basis to scoping and screening partnerships, including via the EPC – the decision-making committee established at core leadership level in April 2021 – as well as leading or participating in numerous private sector events at all levels and locations. Significant involvement of senior management in 2022 helped model and raise the level of engagement across the Organization.

This included FAO senior management supporting meetings with private sector entities, from exploratory meetings for new engagements, to planning discussions with established partners. These ranged from Chambers of Commerce, industry, or sectorial associations (e.g., Food and Drink Europe, GrowAsia, World Economic Forum), to members of the Private Sector Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), to multistakeholder conferences or initiatives involving public-private partnerships, such as the Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee, to co-organization of the Food and Agriculture Pavilion during COP27 in collaboration with Rockefeller Foundation and the Global Dairy Platform, to side events with the GCF and GEF and events with the private sector in attendance (e.g. the Global Conference on Sustainable Plant Nutrition Webinar Series with the International Fertilizer Association).

This year's edition of the FAO Innovation Awards also involved the private sector, with Pinduoduo, China's largest agricultural e-commerce marketplace, receiving the award from the FAO Director-General for developing innovative solutions to connect smallholder farmers with markets.

Better data and analytics

In 2022, FAO integrated a CRM system into the CONNECT Portal, allowing the Organization to better track and support the management of all private sector engagements across FAO locations worldwide. The system is designed to track all private sector engagements through all steps of the engagement cycle, creating a single data repository and eliminating the need to rely on paper and email exchanges. It provides a more accurate overview of the Organization's work with the private sector, and makes the engagement cycle simpler, more efficient and transparent from beginning to end.

With real-time information available online and accessible from anywhere, the system significantly reduces time previously spent on searching for information and verifying data. It also enables automatic alerts to FAO contact leads and partnership managers to take action when required, and displays a clear snapshot of key data via a set of dashboards linked to individual records that contain historical tracking. Having a complete picture of the relevant private sector engagement data allows FAO to better manage priorities for strategic planning and report progress, as well as to find records in an audit trail.

The system was released to FAO users in phases, beginning with data population from headquarters in July, and was available in all FAO locations by December 2022. A team of user champions in each region supported the rollout, and users from all FAO regions and headquarters participated in an in-depth training programme, consisting of five webinars designed to address the needs of different user profiles. The training offered a series of demos and hands-on practice, supplemented by individual, on-demand consultations. Over 100 trainees participated in the webinars, and the training materials were shared more broadly through FAO. Since the system became available to the entire Organization, more than 250 new private sector entities have been uploaded, consolidating previously dispersed databases.

Continuous learning and exchange of experiences

During 2022, FAO supported employee capacity development through the rollout of a comprehensive private sector capacity development package, composed of a practical guide to private sector engagement, an e-learning course, and a series of seven webinars on private sector engagement tailored to various regional and technical profiles. The series of webinars, each lasting three half-days, reached participants across FAO headquarters and Regional Offices, and the large majority of attendees reported an increase in their confidence and knowledge levels regarding engaging with the private sector. An overwhelming 97 percent reported they would recommend the webinars to other colleagues.

The revitalized Private Sector inter-departmental working group (PS-IDWG), a dedicated platform to share knowledge and experiences, has also propelled private sector engagement by equipping employees with the skills to engage with the private sector within FAO. In line with FAO's Private Sector Engagement Strategy and in contribution to the Organization's strategic objectives, it offers colleagues from different parts of the Organization a chance to work as "one FAO" in building impactful private sector engagements. The number and composition of PS-IDWG members now better reflects the needs and opportunities at operational level and represents different technical aspects.

Meetings centre on thematic discussions, which PS-IDWG members propose and select, and help to improve internal communication between various divisions on FAO's work with the private sector, highlighting needs, gaps and opportunities for engagement and explaining processes. During 2022, the PS-IDWG held two meetings, focusing on the themes "opportunities for private sector engagement in PPAs" and "the private sector as a game-changer for inclusive economic growth".

Looking outward, FAO also completed all the preparatory steps for the establishment of the informal Private Sector Advisory Group (PSAG), which will serve as an independent group to collect the views of private sector actors to support the implementation of FAO's Private Sector Engagement Strategy. The composition of PSAG participants ensures balanced regional representation, geographical diversity within the regions, and even coverage of different types of private sector entities and sectors of activities along the agrifood value chain. The list of nominees has been finalized, paving the way for the first meeting of PSAG to be held on 31 January 2023 (see [Annex](#) for more information).

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Lessons learned in 2022

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All FAO employees play an important role in fostering private sector engagements. The last year has shown that understanding the potential benefits of a particular engagement is crucial to building a successful partnership: the most impactful engagements were not always defined by a formal, signed agreement – informal engagements proved equally able to bring about change.

Empowering employees is essential

FAO's Private Sector Engagement Strategy envisions that all FAO employees have a role to play in fostering private sector engagements. Any FAO employee can identify a need or opportunity for potential engagement with the private sector. Decentralized offices have a particularly critical role to play in building on-the-ground engagements with the private sector, while staff at headquarters can offer a unique perspective on strategic global engagement along key lines of thematic interest, such as the PPAs.

For FAO employees to have the necessary tools to build meaningful, impactful engagements, empowerment of staff is necessary, via a continuous, 360-degree capacity development programme that can address knowledge gaps and concerns the staff have “on the job” when engaging with the private sector.

Choosing the right engagement modality is key

The year 2022 has shown that when evaluating a potential private sector engagement, choosing the right modality – and understanding whether or not the engagement needs to be formalized to achieve its goals – is the foundation for the success and effectiveness of the collaboration. FAO's Private Sector Engagement Strategy promotes a wide range of structures of engagement – from policy dialogue, advocacy and communication, to innovation, data sharing and dissemination, and support for financing and investment. Whether these are applied in the context of a formal partnership with a long-term work plan, or in the context of an informal engagement, the impact of the collaboration in either case hinges on having done the groundwork to understand what will be the most effective modality for the particular engagement.

The breadth of FAO's mandate and diversity of on-the-ground realities in which the Organization operates means that no single modality is the correct choice for all engagements. FAO's work with the private sector can further progress towards the 2030 Agenda, and country and regional goals, in many ways, and the key to success lies in choosing the correct modality for the situation.

Engaging informally with the private sector in support of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative

As part of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, FAO Bangladesh works with the government and private sector to develop value chains for profitable commodities, build agro-industries, and expand the agroprocessing sector, efficient water management systems, and digital services.

In 2021, representatives of five Bangladeshi private sector entities visited the Netherlands to increase technical cooperation and build commercial relationships with Dutch firms and institutions. One of the companies was ACI Agro, a leading agribusiness company that provides solutions to sustainably improve agriculture, livestock and fisheries to support development of agrifood value chains.

ACI Agro was looking for a specific potato variety with a shorter production cycle, better productivity, and high resistance to pests, and information on its production technology. During the visit, they identified a Dutch company, Schaap Holland, to supply them with the desired potato variety, which will help farmers in Bangladesh be more competitive on the market.

Schaap Holland demonstrated a strong interest in providing ACI Agro with the technical advice to grow the new variety; as a result, ACI Agro established a farm in Dhaka to grow a new variety of potatoes to meet the market demand. Going forward, ACI Agro will also produce new varieties to meet the local demand.



Be proactive rather than reactive

Both FAO's Private Sector Engagement Strategy and Strategic Framework 2022–2031 identify transformative partnerships as key to achieving both global and organizational goals. Mutually beneficial collaborations with the private sector, those which are capable of galvanizing support for FAO's PPAs and driving collective action, are necessary to deliver on the Organization's commitment to its Members to support them in achieving the SDGs.

To establish engagements with this potential, FAO must be even more proactive in identifying and approaching private sector entities that will complement the Organization's strengths. This process must be supported both at a strategic and practical level: the capacity development programme has provided a good basis for a proactive approach, by empowering employees to understand the process and fill in the gaps, while a new mapping tool, which will be rolled out in 2023, will allow for better analysis and targeting of the most promising private sector engagements.

If you can't measure it, you can't improve it

Prior to 2022, the available tools to measure the impact of FAO's private sector engagements were highly qualitative – annual progress reports which offered a limited set of data on formal engagements, and success stories published on the CONNECT Portal which focused on a specific achievement of the engagement. Such data was insufficient to produce a full picture of concrete results across all engagements and their impact, and the time that elapsed between reports made it challenging to act swiftly and make timely decisions on where and if improvements were needed to achieve better results.

Through the CONNECT Portal's CRM system, FAO will be able to run quantitative assessments based on key performance indicators (KPIs), designed at the initial stage of engagement, tracked through the portal (<https://www.fao.org/connect-private-sector/en/>) and reported quarterly. These improvements on reporting will allow for a more comprehensive analysis of activities, and allow timely adjustments to maximize impact.



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Key directions for the future



Going forward, FAO's work with the private sector will continue to build on lessons learned since the implementation of the strategy, while focusing on the following priorities.

Aiming for greater diversity to catalyse impact

In order to ensure that FAO's private sector engagements are truly impactful and benefit those most in need, greater diversity of engagements, and more comprehensive assessment and measurement of the results of these engagements is crucial.

The new mapping tool will be key to identifying the best fitting private sector entities to engage with – helping the Organization to ensure that all prospective engagements have the potential for significant impact on the ground – and to pinpointing gaps that must be addressed to diversify FAO's private sector portfolio.

Meanwhile, better data collection and more detailed analysis will be possible via the [CONNECT Portal](#), using the CRM system to generate more accurate quantitative assessments through precise reporting on KPIs which are predefined with partners. These include, for example, the percentage of activities fulfilled against the work plan and results achieved, including the number and type of beneficiaries supported by the collaboration.

Leveraging targeted investments

Boosting FAO's technical ability to support countries

FAO's engagement with the private sector is primarily focused on leveraging investments to help Members achieve the SDGs, rather than direct fundraising for FAO-managed programmes or projects. The notable exception to this is engagement with philanthropic foundations that provide funding for humanitarian and development activities.

While FAO has traditionally maintained strong relations with a small number of foundations, this is an area with significant potential for expansion. Several high potential foundations have been identified as having the capacity to operate at scale given their experience in working with United Nations organizations, and interest in funding activities that support the four betters, the cross-cutting themes and accelerators that are a part of the Strategic Framework 2022–2031.

Heading into 2023, FAO will work to optimize the roles and responsibilities of FAO divisions and teams, strengthen FAO external communications and target outreach materials and approaches to partnership building with the aim to build relationships of mutual trust and to maximize the return on these specific resource mobilization efforts.

Scaling up investments from the private sector through the Hand-in-Hand Initiative

Scaling up investments will continue to be a major priority for FAO, with the Hand-in-Hand Initiative team monitoring and supporting countries in facilitating investments, and inviting direct engagement of the private sector with governments for key investment cases.

Seven national level HIH investment fora are planned globally for the coming year, including a subregional forum in Latin America by the Central America Integration System (SICA) in April 2023. Some African investment cases developed by HIH will be used by governments and presented at an African Union/African Development Bank event in January 2023, the Feed Africa: Food Sovereignty and Resilience Summit, which will facilitate a specific private sector and Business-to-Business (B2B) collaboration; and at a regional AGRA Food systems event in late 2023, which will feature a dedicated B2B and SME matchmaking session.

Complementing global multilateral funds

Increasingly, global multilateral funds, such as the GCF and GEF, require partner agencies like FAO to attract investments from the private sector in order to submit project proposals for funding. These additional funds are intended to support the implementation of the GCF- and GEF-financed projects and further progress towards achieving the SDGs. FAO has made good progress in discussions with several private sector entities interested in co-financing project proposals, and 2023 promises to see an increase of SDG-aligned investments from the private sector through multilateral funds, helping to bridge the financing gap towards achieving Agenda 2030.

Increasing the uptake and use of FAO digital tools

The addition of a CRM system to the [CONNECT Portal](#) has significantly helped to improve how FAO manages, tracks and reports on its private sector engagements. The full rollout of the functionality will continue into 2023 and the next steps include: creating dashboards to provide generic information on private sector entities to a larger audience from across FAO staff and Members; continuing capacity development for users; collecting feedback to implement improvements and system enhancements; and allowing impact assessment readiness and matchmaking in accordance with FAO needs.

Digital tools to facilitate staff capacity development will also play a key role in 2023. The Private Sector Practical Guide and e-learning will continually be refined and improved, and regularly updated to reflect any changes or new information that affects procedures. Additional capacity-building webinars are planned for 2023 on specific topics related to the engagement process, such as on the preparation of Impact/benefit and Risk mitigation/management Plans (IBRMPs) which are required by the due diligence process, and on the use of the mapping tool to allow employees to identify and target most promising private sector engagements. General webinars, which allow colleagues to keep up to speed with any updates to the procedures and share best practices, are also envisioned.



Annex

7

PSAG members

Ajinomoto Co., Inc	Japan
Alianza Cooperativa Internacional – Américas (ACI AMÉRICAS)	Uruguay
Alianza Latinoamericana de Asociaciones de la Industria de Alimentos y Bebida (ALAIAB)	Costa Rica
Anacafé	Guatemala
Arab Fertilizer Association (AFA)	Egypt
CODEOP	Spain
DANONE	France
East Africa Grain Council	Kenya
Elite Agro	United Arab Emirates
Empowering Farmers Foundation (EFF)	Zambia
Food Banking Regional Network	Egypt
German Agribusiness Alliance	Germany
Global Dairy Platform (GDP)	United States of America
International Development Advisory Services (IDAS, KPMG) East Africa	Kenya

INVISIO Group	Madagascar
Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD) – Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	Saudi Arabia
MAYA Sarl	Mali
Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network	Fiji
Pakistan Agricultural Coalition	Pakistan
PANDA Retail Co. (Retail Sector) Savola Food	Saudi Arabia
Paradise Foods Limited	Papua New Guinea
Pinduoduo Inc.	China
SOLINFTEC	Brazil
Tetra Laval Group/Tetra Laval Food for Development	Sweden
Turkish Food and Beverage Industry Associations (TGDF)	Türkiye

PSAG observers

Africa Region	Observer: South Africa
Europe Region	Observer: France
Latin America and the Caribbean Region	Observer: Argentina
Near East Region	Observer: Sudan
North America Region	Observers: Canada (co-chair) United States of America (co-chair)
Southwest Pacific and Asia Regions	Observer: Australia

Resource Mobilization and Private Sector
Partnerships Division (PSR)

**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations (FAO)**

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