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Sustainable Development Goals and FAO's Strategic Objectives: Expected Results in the Africa Region

Executive Summary

On 25 September 2015 the UN's 193 Member States adopted¹ a new global framework for sustainable development: "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."² The new agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, which are to be achieved in the next 15 years (2016-2030). The 2030 Agenda is universal, with perspectives and responsibilities reflecting the priorities and needs of all countries. Being more ambitious than MDGs, the SDGs aim at eradicating all forms of hunger and poverty while making a global commitment to restoring and sustainably managing natural resources. In their scope, the SDGs and targets introduce a new vision of development based on the design of programmes and policies that are integrative and holistic, enabling more innovative development strategies. The SDGs integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, with closely interwoven goals and targets, and demand comprehensive and participatory approaches to problem-solving and policy-making. By design, the 2030 Agenda calls upon Member States and their partners to explore the many interlinkages across goals and targets.

FAO has been very active in the post-2015 process from the early consultative stages. In providing technical assistance, the Organization has worked in close collaboration with the Rome-based Agencies, and with allied organizations within and outside the UN system, to forge a global consensus on a comprehensive, integrated approach to ending poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and to promote a global transition to sustainable agriculture.

¹ UN A/RES/70/1: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

² Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&referer=/english/&Lang=E

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FAO has also forged major global alliances to promote restoration, equitable access to, and sustainable use of natural resources, protection of biodiversity, and an urgent response to climate change.

Food and agriculture have a massive footprint in the 2030 Agenda, and it is now widely accepted that food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture are key to achieving the core objectives of the 2030 Agenda: ending poverty and hunger. Rapid progress on these goals is also seen as key to achieving the remaining SDGs.

Following the adoption of the Agenda 2030, and for the following two years, most Member countries will select from among the 17 goals and 169 targets their own national goals and targets, based on their own national priorities, needs, stage of development and capacities, resources, strategies, and partnerships.

African countries and their Regional Economic Communities (RECs) will draw upon FAO's support to strengthen capacity in policy analysis, data collection and evidence-based analyses in order to achieve food and nutrition security, eradicate rural poverty and ensure the resilience of livelihoods, foster a transition to more productive and sustainable agricultural production systems, protect biodiversity, help restore and ensure sustainable use of natural resources, and take steps to address climate change.

FAO actively supports African initiatives to address these issues, most notably CAADP, and this support will need to be enhanced in line with the Malabo Declaration, Implementation Strategy and Road Map. These instruments, which reflect African priorities, will help shape Africa's specific SDG-linked strategies for agricultural transformation in line with the first 10-year plan in the context of Africa's Agenda 2063.

Investment in vulnerable populations and rural infrastructure are required to promote growth and development in rural areas. Increasing rural people's access to productive resources and technologies, employment and incomes will lead to better food security and nutrition. Governments should therefore increase their domestic investment in rural infrastructure, which can attract private investment and significantly raise economy-wide productivity. Public-private partnerships should be promoted for expanding infrastructural investment.

I. Introduction

1. On 25 September 2015 at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York, the UN's 193 Member States adopted³ the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."⁴ The SDGs are comprised of 17 aspirational goals with 169 targets, to be achieved globally by 2030. The 2030 Agenda is expected to guide the development actions of all UN Member States, the United Nations system agencies, funds, and programs and allied organizations and institutions over the next 15 years.

2. The 2030 Agenda was shaped through the largest multi-stakeholder consultation in history, and was forged during intergovernmental discussions that began immediately after the conclusion of the 2012 Rio Conference on Sustainable Development. The Agenda is ambitious, transformative and multi-dimensional. Although the 2030 Agenda drew upon lessons learned from the MDGs, the new SDGs offer a qualitatively different framework for sustainable development:

a. The 2030 Agenda is universal. It reflects the interests and needs of all countries, while recognizing that countries' contributions will depend on their capacities and level of development. It hinges on a shared commitment to a new, multi-faceted global partnership that emphasizes the need for ensuring full access to a wide array of "means of implementation" -- finance, technology, capacity development,

b. SDGs are far more ambitious than MDGs, aiming at eradicating of all forms of hunger and poverty while restoring and sustainably managing natural resources.

c. The SDGs integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, with closely interwoven goals and targets, and propose comprehensive and participatory approaches in problem-solving and policy-making.

d. As a outcome of an intergovernmental negotiations, the SDGs enjoy strong country ownership and commitment for their implementation. Countries will need new forms of assistance to advance the implementation of SDGs at national and sub-national levels. They will select from among the 17 goals and 169 targets their own national goals and targets, based on their own national priorities, needs, stage of development and capacities, resources, strategies, and partnerships.

3. Development actors will need to revise their coordinated and individual support to countries by progressively aligning to the SDGs in order to expedite implementation during the forthcoming years. The nature of UN coordinated assistance needs to evolve, with less emphasis on joint projects and more attention to policy advice, institutional capacity development, and monitoring of progress. Specialized agencies with their expertise, technical knowledge, and data collection capabilities are well placed to lead relevant efforts in the UN system in their respective mandates.

4. As a first step in this direction countries and development actors need to align their strategic priorities, programmes and activities with the SDGs and shall identify areas for individual and coordinated support to countries.

5. FAO has engaged intensively in the Post-2015 process from the outset, deploying its knowledge and expertise for shaping technical discussions, identifying realistic objectives and targets, and determining relevant indicators for the monitoring of progress. Effective contribution to the process was enabled by FAO's internal corporate coordination mechanism, a continuous dialogue with the membership and a wide range of FAO partners, a strong collaboration among the UN RBAs, as

³ UN A/RES/70/1: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

⁴ Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&referer=/english/&Lang=E

well through FAO leadership in numerous processes and alliances inside and outside the UN. The main achievement of this effort is a 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (including a new set of inter-governmentally agreed Sustainable Development Goals) that strongly reflects FAO's mandate, vision and corporate perspective.

6. The 17 Global Goals (Table 1) will now need to be recast within the context of country specific realities, capacities and levels of development while respecting national policies and priorities.

Table 1: Overview of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

<p>Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p> <p>Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</p> <p>Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p> <p>Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</p> <p>Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p> <p>Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</p> <p>Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</p> <p>Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p> <p>Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p> <p>Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries</p> <p>Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p> <p>Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p> <p>Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p> <p>Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</p> <p>Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</p> <p>Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <p>Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Global Sustainable Development</p>

7. This information note discusses the role of FAO and its Strategic Objectives (see below) in order to determine linkages and requirements for food and nutrition security in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within the context of Africa's priorities.

II. FAO's Comparative Advantage and the Sustainable Development Goals

8. FAO has been actively engaged in the Post-2015 process from the outset, deploying its knowledge and expertise for shaping technical discussions, identifying realistic objectives and targets, and determining relevant indicators for the monitoring of progress. FAO's corporate contribution to the post-2015 process has been drawing on the reviewed Strategic Framework and its Strategic Objective results framework, the Regional Initiatives, the Country Programming Frameworks as well

as the Zero Hunger Challenge. The comprehensive vision of FAO's Strategic Framework is thus well reflected in the formulation of the SDGs and their targets.

9. Of the 17 SDG goals, 14 are more or less directly related to FAO's mission based on the Organization's global goals – the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; the elimination of poverty; and the sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, and are clearly embedded into FAO's Strategic Objectives. As countries are organising themselves to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is important that FAO ensures that its programmes contribute in the most effective way to countries' efforts in that sense. Through its international expertise and its large country coverage, FAO is well positioned to assist broad regional and international partnerships, including South-South cooperation, required to achieve zero hunger by 2030. The FAO Strategic Objectives and SDGs are well aligned to the development priorities in Africa as contained in the Malabo Declaration as well as its Implementation Strategy and Roadmap.

10. Member countries will select from among the 17 goals and 169 targets to set their own national goals and targets, based on their own national priorities, needs, stage of development and capacities, resources, strategies, and partnerships. African countries and their Regional Economic Communities (RECs) will need FAO's support to strengthen capacity in policy analysis, data collection and evidence based analyses in agriculture, food and nutrition security and rural development. FAO has been actively supporting African countries in implementing CAADP and this support will need to be enhanced in line with the Malabo Declaration, Implementation Strategy and Road Map which reflect Africa's specific SDG-linked strategies for agricultural transformation consistent with the first 10 year plan in the context of Africa's Agenda 2063.

Box 1

FAO's Strategic Objectives

- 1) Help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition
- 2) Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable
- 3) Reduce rural poverty
- 4) Enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems
- 5) Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises

11. As the leading UN specialized agency promoting food and nutrition security through sustainable agriculture, FAO has drawn on its broad multidisciplinary knowledge and experience to propose a number of global indicators spanning six goals.

12. FAO is working on two fronts: improving the statistical measures for hunger, malnutrition, resilience and smallholder agriculture required for monitoring SDG2 (SO 1, SO 5); and strengthening the set of indicators that capture the sustainable use and management of natural resources for hunger and poverty eradication which corresponds to SO 1, SO 2 and SO 4, and across a number of other SDGs including SDG14 and SDG15.

13. These indicators can be used by Members to effectively monitor their own progress towards the national goals and targets that they have set for themselves. It is crucial that the indicator framework remains manageable and low-cost at both the national and international levels, and that the indicators at international level effectively measure each target's intended outcome. FAO and other UN agencies and partners also have a critical role to play in organizing technical cooperation activities to enhance countries' capacities to produce the indicators on a regular basis.

14. Countries in Africa are already discussing ways of adapting global indicators to national priorities, including by further disaggregating data at national and sub-national level and supporting comprehensive country analyses leading to the identification of national targets. Appropriate coordination between the statistical community and country-based discussions would need to be established to ensure consistency in the monitoring of progress at all levels. All of this will require additional investments in order to facilitate the necessary innovations and improvements to national statistical systems and to strengthen national capacities to develop and maintain these.

15. To this end, several projects have been initiated by FAO and other partners to help countries meet the new monitoring challenges presented by the SDGs. Through the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Statistics, FAO is working on the development of guidelines on new cost-effective methods to produce food and agricultural data, strengthening Regional Training Institutions & improving the skills of national statisticians, providing technical assistance to design sector-specific strategic plans, enhancing institutional coordination, testing new statistical tools. FAO also directly supports countries' efforts to strengthen their national survey programmes.

16. The SDG 1 tackles poverty in all its forms everywhere, addressing both absolute and relative poverty (SDG Target 1.1 and SDG Target 1.2). To achieve this, it will be dependent on growth in agriculture since this sector is the single sector which employs the largest number of people in the world. Through focusing on rural development, where the majority of the world's extreme poor are living⁵, establishing social protection systems, building rural-urban linkages and focusing on boosting the incomes of the critical agents of change – smallholder family farmers, foresters, fisher folk, rural women and youth – is key to achieving inclusive and equitable growth while tackling the root causes of poverty. The third Strategic Objective (SO 3) of FAO is directly linked to SDG1 as FAO is working towards reducing rural poverty.

17. The SDG2 calls for ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition while promoting sustainable agriculture is much the same way as stipulated in FAO's SO 1, SO 2 and SO 4, which have comprehensive approaches focusing on fostering political commitment and accountability, improving capacities and mobilizing resources at all levels to meet Zero Hunger by 2030. In these approaches, strengthening the contribution of agriculture and food systems to improved nutrition is also prioritized.

18. One of the greatest challenges of the future is to increase food production using less water. The SDG6 focuses on clean water and sanitation. By 2030, if the status quo is not improved, 1.8 billion people are projected to be faced with absolute water scarcity. FAO is promoting the sustainable and effective use of inputs through its SO 2 and the Save and Grow approach where the crop production dimension of sustainable food management is emphasized to call for the Green Revolution through an ecosystem approach that draws on nature's contributions to crop growth, such as soil organic matter, water flow regulation, pollination and bio-control of insect pests and diseases.

19. Affordable and clean energy will play a key enabling role in achieving food and nutrition security. Food systems, which currently consume 30 percent of the world's energy, will gradually need to decouple from fossil fuel dependence and SDG7 looks at affordable and clean energy for all.

⁵ Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2878Africa-SDGs%20Outcome%20Doc%20ENG.pdf>

Africa continues to largely depend on unsustainable harvested traditional biomass energy as cooking fuel and income generating activity in rural areas. SDG12 is promoting responsible sustainable consumption and production which on itself will contribute to SDG2. Eliminating food loss and waste is one of the five elements of the Zero Hunger Challenge and falls within SO 4 of FAO global result framework.

20. Climate change remains one of the key challenges of our times and recently in Paris an agreement was reached to set out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming. SDG13 looks at promoting global climate action hand-in-hand with the UNFCCC. Both of FAO's SO 2 and SO 5 aim to support countries adapt to the impacts of climate change as well as to enhance the mitigation capacities to limit GHG emissions.

21. SDG14 underlines the importance of the sustainable management of our ocean ecosystems. Worldwide nearly 3 billion people receive 20 percent of their daily animal protein intake from fish, while almost 29 percent of commercially important marine fish stocks are overfished and 61 percent fully fished⁶. Through its second Strategic Objective (SO 2), FAO aims to make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable.

22. SDG15 is also linked to FAO's SO 2 and promotes the sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems, forests, mountains, land, soils and biodiversity. Through the achievements of both SDG14 and SDG15, important leeway can be made towards SDG1 and 2 as well.

III. FAO and the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of Africa

23. The SDGs succeeded the MDGs whose timeline came to an end in 2015. While progress was made globally, the MDG achievements in Africa were somewhat mixed, so they will remain relevant beyond 2015. With the SDGs focusing on integrating economic, social and environment dimension in an integrated framework, international policy coordination and cooperation will also become more challenging in post-2015 and will require significant practical approaches to enhance policy setting amongst relevant stakeholders.

24. Each country faces specific challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development. The most vulnerable countries and, in particular, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states, deserve special attention, as do countries in situations of conflict and post-conflict countries. There are also serious challenges within many middle-income countries.

25. The African Union adopted in January 2015, Agenda 2063 – a shared strategic continental framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development. A first Ten Year Plan (2014-2023) was developed and adopted in June 2015 to ensure effective implementation. Seven African Aspirations and their corresponding priority areas are fully aligned to the targets of the SDGs. These seven aspirations were adopted earlier in June 2014 and are dubbed the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods.

26. The Malabo Declaration and its Implementation Strategy and Roadmap represents very bold commitments, with specific targets linked to the SDGs but with a very ambitious time frame of 2025 to attain the following: i) commitments to the principles and values of the CAADP process (SDG1, 2); ii) to enhancing investment finance in agriculture (SDG2); iii) to ending hunger in Africa by 2025 (SDG2); iv) to halving poverty by 2025 through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation

⁶ Post 2015 and SDGs: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-az934e.pdf>

(SDG1); v) to boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services (SDG2); vi) to enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other related risks (SDG13); and; vii) to mutual accountability to actions and results which will assist countries reaching the targets under the respective SDGs.

27. The delivery and impact pathways of FAO's work in Africa have been improved by effectively translating its normative work into country-level impact through using Country Programming Frameworks and Regional Initiatives as main modes of delivery. Three Regional Initiatives (RIs) in Africa are helping member countries work towards achieving the newly developed SDG targets. These are: RI-1 Africa's 2025 Zero Hunger Challenge; RI-2 Sustainable Production Intensification in Africa; and; RI-3 Building Resilience in Africa's Drylands.

28. RI-1 is firmly grounded in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) process and encompasses a diverse combination of interventions ranging from expansion in food production, strengthening social protection mechanisms and the promotion of right to food legislations and interventions. It is linked to SO 1 and will contribute to the SDG2.

29. RI-2 is linked to SO 2 and SO 4 and focuses on sustainable production intensification and commercialization of agriculture following a landscape approach across key value chains. Closing the production gap while promoting the goods and services from the environmental resource base will contribute to SDG12, 13, 14 and 15 with indirect links to SDGs 1 and 2 as well.

30. RI-3 aims at building resilience in Africa's drylands looking at strengthening institutional capacity and policy development for risk prevention and reduction; monitoring risk and providing early warning related information as well as managing trans-boundary natural disasters and threats. It is anchored in SO 5 and contributes to SDG1, 2, 9, 11 and 13 respectively. Many of Africa's poor and hungry live in areas prone to natural disasters or protracted conflict. These crises directly affect food access and production, undermining efforts to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and poverty, and to achieve sustainable development. In this regard, the implementation of sound resilience policies can sustain the livelihoods of the most vulnerable.

IV. Conclusion

31. For Africa, the development of human and institutional capacity for the implementation of the SDGs and related targets are of great importance. The adoption of the goals will require capacity-development strategies and programmes to be fully orientated towards the cross-cutting nature of sustainable development. Both at regional and national level, frameworks will need to be developed for the implementation of the goals and targets and as such ensure that the SDGs are tailored and adapted to national priorities, context and circumstances.

32. In the development of appropriate monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the goals, ambitious targets and indicators are critical. Where baseline data of certain targets do not yet exist, strong support is needed for strengthening data collection and capacity building in African countries.

33. Investing in vulnerable populations can promote growth and development in rural areas. Increasing their access to resources, employment and incomes will lead to better food security and nutrition. Furthermore, investment in rural infrastructure – roads, transportation, electrification, communication - diversifying rural employment and improving rural-urban linkages can contribute to a more interconnected, inclusive and vibrant society. African governments need to play a key role to enhance investment in infrastructure, by increasing their domestic investment which can attract private investment and significantly raise economy-wide productivity. Public-private partnerships can be used

for expanding infrastructural investment, however high level investment, public or private, requires high domestic savings, while foreign savings, in terms of capital inflows, can only be complementary.

34. Alongside the public sector, participation and involvement of Non-State Actors are important to ensure sustainability. FAO can be a bridge between them since the private sector is the main productive sector of the global economy, and the holder of much of the advanced technologies and management systems that will be crucial for success of the SDGs. Private-sector companies should support the SDGs in practical and measurable ways, in their policies, production processes, and engagement with stakeholders.

35. At the national level, policies for promoting technological innovations involve industrial policy, trade policy, and national agricultural investment policy. These coupled with other broader macroeconomic policies resulting in direct or spill-over effects of technology, know-how, entrepreneurial skills and business practices should be maintained to stimulate, sustain and generate additional growth out of the existing resources for transforming the African economic landscape. However, both domestic and external financial resources as well as technical expertise will need to be mobilized for the implementation of the goals.

36. Finally, with its expertise and resources, FAO, along with other partners, are well positioned to support African countries in achieving the SDGs, most of which are related to FAO's work. Therefore, Africa cannot afford to miss this opportunity of becoming the Zero Hunger Generation.