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Investing in rural people

Collaboration of the United Nations Rome-based agencies

IFAD perspective – position paper

Note to Executive Board representatives

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ASAP	Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (IFAD)
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CPM	country programme manager
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FoodSECuRE	Food Security Climate Resilience Facility (WFP)
GPFI	Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (G20)
ICT	information and communication technology
IFI	international financial institution
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
P4P	Purchase for Progress initiative (WFP)
RBA	Rome-based agency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TCI	FAO Investment Centre
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

1. The United Nations system has three premier agencies in the field of food and agriculture:¹ the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IFAD and the World Food Programme (WFP). The presence of all three agencies in the same city – with similar overarching goals, but different mandates and instruments – presents a unique opportunity to respond to the challenges posed by the post-2015 agenda and its calls for eradicating poverty and for a holistic approach to food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture.
2. However, to capitalize on this opportunity, the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) and their governance structures may need to frame a value-for-money proposition that better positions the purpose of each agency and the need for a collaborative strategy that builds on the strengths and comparative advantages of each and can demonstrate the delivery of results. In doing so, it may be more important to highlight the differences in the RBAs' respective mandates and instruments rather than their similarities. Coordinated complementary approaches may be more valuable than joint actions, since each RBA would be able to offer a menu of unique, specialized and differentiated instruments and products to the benefit of its clients. This would set the base for an undisputed Rome-based food and agriculture hub, combining the elements of an international financial institution, a United Nations specialized agency and an emergency relief operations centre.
3. Collaboration happens when staff incentives are aligned, transaction costs are low and mutual benefits clear – not by decree. As a consequence, joint action should not be regarded as always necessary or even desirable. This is particularly the case when, in an effort to collaborate, RBAs are actually drawn into emulation and mission creep, which leads to more competition for leadership and resources. Notwithstanding, there are many example of effective and genuine collaboration illustrated in this paper, many of which have been underreported. They were generated by staff directly as a result of clear business opportunities for coordinated project approaches, joint advocacy, common papers or harmonized corporate systems. These many initiatives were driven by the conviction of the staff of the three RBAs that working together would deliver better products and results.
4. Moreover, RBA collaboration should not be exclusive. It should be cast in the context of the broader partnership strategies of each agency and of the wealth of networks and partnerships that have been individually developed over the years. This represents an additional asset for each agency in leveraging knowledge and financing, and offers an extra advantage in terms of RBA collaboration. As the new Sustainable Development Goals shape the evolving development architecture, a Rome-based United Nations food and agriculture hub has the potential to become more appealing by securing leadership in rural poverty eradication, sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition. This is an opportunity that RBAs should not miss.

¹ Agriculture is used generically to cover livestock, fisheries and natural resources.

Collaboration of the United Nations Rome-based agencies

IFAD perspective – position paper

I. Introduction

1. Over time, the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) have accumulated a wealth of experience, making each organization the global leader in its respective area of expertise, with unique characteristics and comparative advantages. None of them, alone, dispose of the full range of policy, technical, logistical and financial instruments to provide member countries with the level of assistance required to achieve food security and sustainable agriculture. However, working more effectively together and synergizing their differences and complementarities to the benefit of their common clients would enhance the scope and impact of their interventions. This would establish the basis for an undisputed United Nations food and agriculture hub, and would position RBAs as the leaders in this field for implementation of the post-2015 agenda, and particularly Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2).²
2. In addition, IFAD's contribution to the post-2015 process has been cast in the context of wider support to rural transformation that extends beyond its participation in the food and agriculture agenda of SDG2. This support rests on the following four pillars: (i) leveraging the rural/urban nexus for development; (ii) developing an empowerment agenda for rural livelihoods; (iii) investing in smallholder family agriculture for global food security and nutrition; and (iv) promoting the resilience of poor rural households. RBA collaboration could boost IFAD effectiveness in pursuing these goals, but IFAD's unique role as a United Nations agency and an international financial institution (IFI) will also require a more diversified set of partners and approaches.
3. The presence of the three agencies in Rome offers real opportunities to capitalize on their proximity as a source of diversified products and services, as well as of better-integrated packages that build on their respective strengths. The case for a Rome-based food and agriculture hub is predicated on the idea that most of the development assistance, services and financing required in the area of food and agriculture can be found in Rome through RBAs and their respective partners. This means that the case for the RBAs' "value-for-money" proposition will need to be built on their differences rather than their similarities, on their respective visions of the future (as agreed by their governance structures) and on the networks of partners they have been able to build.

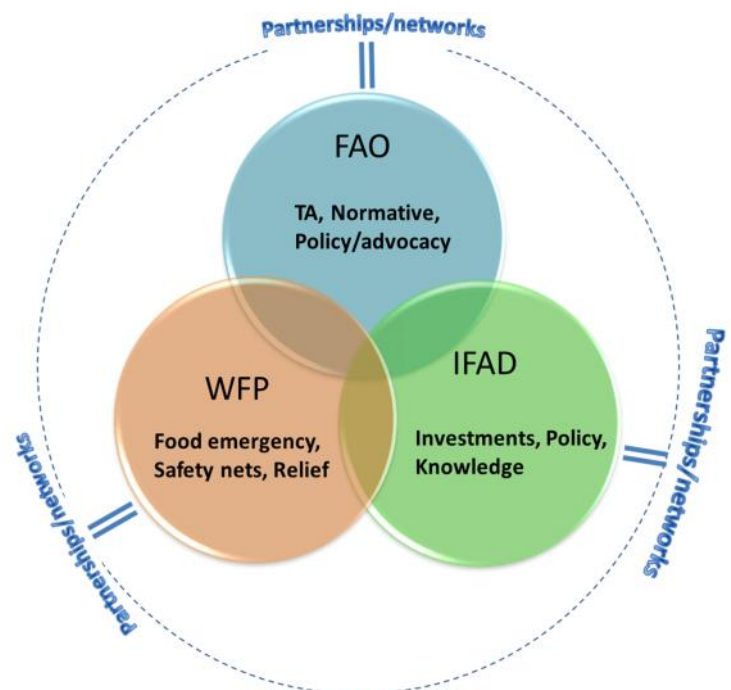
II. The RBA "hub-and-spoke" model: partnership through variable geometry

4. To deliver their diverse mandates, the agencies were created with differentiated governance structures, business models and instruments that characterized their identities. They share a common commitment to eradicating hunger and malnutrition and a focus on supporting those living in poverty in rural areas by increasing the productivity, incomes and resilience of smallholder family farms. RBA collaboration rests on the principle of delivering a diversified range of services, some as a package, but mostly individually.
5. With the passage of time, the work of the three agencies has become increasingly intertwined. However, as originally conceived, one could try to delineate their specific mandates along the following porous borders: (i) FAO is regarded as the

² End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

premier forum in which to: formulate policies and negotiate international agreements; generate data, statistics and knowledge to inform policies and normative work; and provide technical assistance and capacity-building to member countries; (ii) WFP is the world leader in the provision of emergency, recovery and development-based food assistance; it also supports safety net programmes and is in the front line in addressing the challenge of bridging humanitarian and development needs; (iii) IFAD is a specialized United Nations agency that operates as an IFI, and is the only IFI exclusively dedicated to smallholder agriculture, rural development and related climate adaptation. It provides financing (loans and grants) for programmes aligned with countries' own development strategies, and generates the knowledge and policy advice needed to assist them in reducing poverty in rural areas.

6. Each agency, in partnership with the other RBAs, has played a predominant role in the establishment of multistakeholder platforms also based in Rome. For example, FAO hosts the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Global Forum for Agriculture Research, the Agriculture Market Information System, the Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock and the Global Partnership for Climate Change, Fisheries and Aquaculture. IFAD hosts the International Land Coalition, the Indigenous Peoples Forum and the related Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility, the Farmers' Forum, the Platform for Agriculture Risk Management (PARM) and the Financing Facility for Remittances. In the area of nutrition, WFP hosts the Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition, and the three agencies play a key role in specific networks such as the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and in the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition. This web of partners and actors strengthens the food and agriculture hub argument, as does the presence of Bioversity International, a research centre also based in Rome and a member of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).



United Nations food and agriculture hub

7. As do the other agencies, IFAD participates in international networks and coordination mechanisms such as the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, the Multilateral Development Banks Aid Effectiveness Group, the Group of 20 (G20) Development Working Group and Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPF), the Microinsurance Network, the United Nations Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality, Gendernet (of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD-DAC]), etc. IFAD's grants programme has been critical in this respect – providing a vehicle to participate in and directly support networks of partners such as the CGIAR centres, Financial Inclusion actors, regional farmers' organizations, think tanks, etc. More recently, promoting partnerships that involve the private sector has also become a dominant feature of IFAD's work programme through the inclusion of public-private-producer partnership mechanisms in the loan portfolio, through which public funds

are used catalytically to "crowd in"³ private resources in support of food supply chains sourced from smallholder farmers.

8. In terms of operational incentives for collaboration, IFAD may place a premium on partners that are potentially keen to cofinance its investment projects. Such cofinancing is often derived from other IFIs (the World Bank, regional banks, OPEC Fund for International Development), the Global Environment Fund, climate funds and domestic sources, rather than from the other RBAs. Similarly, WFP's main incentive could be to select partners that will make its logistics network – and the large-scale procurement and distribution of staple foods – work more effectively. Thus, WFP may have a stronger incentive to collaborate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and with food companies and traders. FAO's principal interest, by contrast, may be to bring its knowledge and expertise to support global consultations around normative and policy negotiations.
9. Thus, each agency has developed partnership strategies that go well beyond the three RBAs. This represents an additional asset for each agency in leveraging knowledge and financing from other actors operating in the same field, along the lines of a "hub-and-spoke" model. It can also represent an invaluable contribution to the comparative advantage of each agency, and offers a much broader pool of expertise, areas of complementarities and synergies on which the other agencies can build.

III. Challenges

10. In response to calls from their governing bodies to increase collaboration and identify priority areas for enhancing synergies, the RBAs jointly formulated Directions for Collaboration among Rome-based Agencies in 2009. IFAD also prepared its own Partnership Strategy in 2012 to achieve greater outreach and expanded impact. While these provide a valid framework for working together, in practice collaboration continues to suffer from the lack of a more differentiated, structured and operational definition of what RBA collaboration really means. As a consequence, collaboration has been opportunistic in choosing relevant entry points that carry clear pay-offs, but also some that have proved ad hoc and ineffective in other cases.
11. Calls for more RBA collaboration from our membership have also suffered from the casual nature of the requests made – without proper analysis of the pros and cons of collaboration in specific fields and of incentive structures, comparative advantages and transaction costs. Collaboration should be assessed on the basis of costs and benefits and of the value that diverse models and instruments could add to joint processes for the benefit of our clients. Collaboration happens when staff incentives are aligned, transaction costs are low, and mutual benefits clear – not by decree. As a consequence, joint action should not be regarded as always necessary or even desirable. "Delivering as one" should be built on the importance of delivering as three (individually), depending on business requirements and specific mandates. Calls for collaboration should not inadvertently be the cause of increased competition for leadership.
12. RBAs are particularly prone to the risk of competition when mobilization of resources is involved. Competition for the attention and resources of donors is a common feature of many organizations. This is inevitable even among RBAs and may even be desirable, as it can spur dynamism and innovation. However, as institutions legitimately try to stabilize their programmes of work and budget and

³ An economic principle in which private investment increases as debt-financed government spending increases. This is caused by government spending boosting the demand for goods, which in turn increases private demand for new output sources, such as factories. (InvestorWords.com)

retain their staff to deliver their core mandates, their efforts can be undermined if resource mobilization is too unpredictable or piecemeal. This is especially the case when funds are mobilized on an ad hoc basis, through donors providing extra-budgetary and supplementary funding earmarked for specific projects or initiatives that are not necessarily in the domain of the comparative advantage of the agency. This could have two types of perverse incentives: (i) mission creep to access donor funds or to respond to uncoordinated demands from client countries is a source of tension, as it expands overlap and undermines collaborative efforts rather than building on established individual strengths; and (ii) by allocating funds only to one agency (often for administrative simplicity), it concentrates, de facto, the leadership role in that agency, which is not necessarily the most efficient way to implement joint initiatives, given very different operational arrangements.

13. The meaning of RBA collaboration would need greater clarification if it is to work to the benefit of our Member States and target beneficiaries. In looking at the diagram of the three agencies' overlapping circles (in the figure), too much attention may have been given to collaboration through areas of overlap rather than through areas in which each agency intervenes on its own through its specific instruments, and where coordinated complementary approaches may be more valuable than joint ventures. As a consequence, the meaning of "collaboration" would drive towards greater focus and specialization rather than towards overlap and mission creep.

IV. Opportunities

14. There are a number of good examples of collaboration that have shown tangible benefits, many of which have been the result of spontaneous individual motivations, rather than decided at the top or through formal agreements. While these kinds of ad hoc initiatives may be mostly driven by individual proactiveness and windows of opportunity, they may actually offer the best potential for collaboration, as they reflect genuine demand. They may also be widely underreported and less visible from headquarters. In assessing the potential of more structured collaboration, it may be useful to build on what already works at diverse levels (global, country and corporate).

A. Global level and advocacy

15. The results of RBAs working together have been substantial at the global level in policy dialogue, communication and advocacy – especially in United Nations-based forums. Among various examples, we could list:
 - (a) CFS has provided an important vehicle for multistakeholder agreements on key topics such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest in the Context of National Food Security or the Principles for Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems. IFAD supports the CFS secretariat, jointly with FAO and WFP, through participation in its Advisory Group and in selected work streams.
 - (b) Advocacy in support of the RIO+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and, more recently, the post-2015 agenda and the joint initiative on the definition of targets and indicators have provided considerable clout in the negotiations around the SDGs on the importance of agriculture, food security and nutrition.
 - (c) The joint "think piece" on Finance for Development also offers a solid basis for better positioning the RBAs as "fit for purpose" in the discussion on the means of implementation of the post-2015 agenda.
 - (d) The current joint initiative on resilience offers a good opportunity to find concrete applications of the resilience concept to specific country contexts

through better-coordinated development of absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities.

- (e) Joint efforts are promoting climate-smart agriculture under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture.
 - (f) Joint efforts of RBAs to advocate gender equality and women's empowerment have been ongoing since the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995). Major efforts have focused on the elimination of discrimination against rural women, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), rural employment, access to land, and food and nutrition security.
 - (g) The RBAs jointly prepare and are co-sponsors of the report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI), which takes stock of progress made towards achieving the internationally established hunger targets, and reflects on what still needs to be done as we transition to the new post-2015 sustainable development agenda.
16. Global advocacy seems to offer good opportunities for collaboration, despite the relatively high transaction costs of preparing joint papers, statements and events. It offers more clout and visibility than what each agency could have obtained individually, and can leverage international support for specific initiatives or feed into the policy debate of each agency. Moreover, as resource mobilization is not immediately at stake, it may be less subject to protective or uncooperative behaviour or competition. In the context of the post-2015 and finance for development discussions, RBAs could offer a "compact" that combines the features of an IFI, a specialized United Nations agency and an emergency relief organization, and positions RBAs, in a unique way, as leading in the delivery of SDG2.
 17. On the communications front, there has been significant RBA collaboration in recent years. This has included: joint efforts to draw attention to agriculture and rural development issues in conjunction with major occasions, such as the annual commemoration of World Food Day and World Food Week; coordinated outreach and messaging around key global initiatives, events or products, including SOFI and the Zero Hunger Challenge; development and promotion of specific products aimed at highlighting the common ground FAO, IFAD and WFP share, such as Hungry Planet, a web-based television series co-produced by the three agencies; and participation in each other's social media campaigns and support for field visits by Member States, such as the media tours organized regularly by the United States mission to the RBAs.
 18. However, achievements on the communication front are not without challenges: FAO, IFAD and WFP have diverse communication objectives, needs and styles. Thus agreeing on and carrying through a unified message, product or approach in support of global advocacy is often difficult. What works for IFAD in messaging is the uniqueness of its mandate and its dual nature as a United Nations agency and an IFI. While there are sometimes advantages in joining forces for selected communication opportunities, the more the three agencies associate their communication efforts, the greater the risk, generally, that the specificity of their identity could be diluted.
 19. IFAD often benefits from a joint RBA approach in United Nations-based forums, since the rest of the United Nations and Member States often identify it – together with FAO and WFP – as the "food agencies". However, this is not the case in other intergovernmental forums – such as the G20, G8, regional forums, OECD-DAC, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the Global Donor Platform, etc. – in which IFAD develops differentiated approaches in engaging at the global level, in line with its IFI role.

B. Country level

20. Differences in RBA business models and instruments are reflected in varying organizational cultures, operational processes, and programme and budgeting cycles. The three RBAs have quite different relationships with national governments, which affects the effectiveness of interagency consultation, coordination mechanisms and strategic priorities. IFAD supports United Nations Resident Coordinator functions and programmes. But, because of its business model and accountability framework, IFAD gives higher priority to its own country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) exercise than to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process or those of other agriculture-sector donor coordination groups. Participation in United Nations coordination meetings can be useful but time-consuming. The costs need to be assessed against the benefits, given IFAD's limited country presence compared with much larger FAO and WFP offices. All this impinges on meaningful collaboration at the country level and needs to be factored into planning and priority setting.
21. FAO and WFP typically implement projects directly through grant resources and often derive fees in this role. In the case of IFAD, except for its relatively smaller grants portfolio, resources are lent to national governments that are responsible for project implementation and have a much greater say in determining priorities for intervention. Thus, progress in developing collaborative approaches through the respective country programmes may be circumscribed or enhanced by the concurrence (or lack thereof) of national governments. In that respect, bilateral collaboration (especially between FAO and WFP) may be easier to achieve than among all three RBAs.
22. Identifying opportunities for country-level coordination requires more detailed analysis and would be facilitated by the following:
 - (a) A "mapping exercise", which allows an exchange of information on the geographical overlap, respective themes of common interest, joint needs, specific areas of cooperation, alignment of objectives and a clear understanding of the benefits that joint activities would bring.
 - (b) Understanding operational realities, programmatic time frames, funding restrictions, staff accountability and alignment of incentives. Leveraging each agency's comparative advantages and different instruments (food assistance, technical assistance, loans for investments), in-country presence, operational capacity and policy engagement. The possibility of bringing in additional partners would be an additional incentive.
 - (c) The commitment of IFAD country programme managers (CPMs) (and their RBA counterparts) is needed. Establishing partnerships at the country level between institutions with different mandates and operating modalities is a challenging and time-consuming task. CPMs' commitment to take on an active role in creating collaborative teams that work effectively across organizational boundaries requires constant investment. It also requires each partner to make the effort to understand the operating modalities of the other and to judge the costs and benefits of the collaboration. Affinity and proactiveness within the team also play critical roles.
 - (d) Planning is key, and the earlier the better. Ideally, joint initiatives should be assessed and decided on from the very beginning so the relevant agencies can take full ownership of the design principles and expectations. COSOPs and concept notes are the right entry points for jointly developing strategies and approaches and for elaborating terms of reference, timetables, missions and outputs. This is the case for both global and country-level initiatives. Trying to enlist the sponsorship of the other agencies on pre-existing concept notes – as a way to advertise the three logos for better donor marketing prospects –

does not necessarily yield the expected outcomes and the level of commitment required.

- (e) Cooperation with the FAO Investment Centre (TCI) will remain an important means for IFAD to avail itself of FAO's knowledge resources and technical assistance for project preparation and supervision. The preparation of annual work plans, with a preliminary assessment of the nature and volume of services requested by IFAD of the centre, would ensure that TCI can more efficiently earmark and plan in advance the provision of its specialized services to IFAD.
23. IFAD was away from country-level platforms for a long time, due to its limited country presence. However, with 40 country offices and 10 more to come, IFAD's business model has now become more country-focused, which opens new opportunities for country-specific and client-driven collaboration among RBAs. There are still many situations in which FAO's technical capacity and expert presence in the field, and WFP's logistics network and large-scale procurement of staple foods can significantly strengthen IFAD-supported interventions. In exchange, there are many situations in which IFAD-funded investment projects can build on FAO policy influence and scale up innovative approaches (as in the case of farmer field schools) or support smallholder producers' organizations in seizing market opportunities offered by WFP procurement.
 24. A number of existing initiatives show the challenges and opportunities for country-level RBA collaboration and are briefly described in the annex: FAO's TCI; WFP's Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative; the joint Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction; IFAD/WFP Weather Risk Management Facility; Kenya Climate Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods Programme; Excellence Award-winning programme for Accelerating Progress towards MDG1c in Mozambique; risk assessment and climate-financing linkages between WFP's Food Security Climate Resilience (FoodSECuRE) Facility and IFAD's Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP); and Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women. Some of these have been generated by a convergence of staff proactiveness and incentives. It would be useful to learn from these experiences to assess the potential for more structured replicability.

C. Thematic knowledge

25. There are many thematic issues subject to regular consultations and occasionally joint publications with RBA counterparts, especially with FAO, such as policy issues, rural finance, seed systems, gender, post-harvest losses, markets, land tenure, livestock, fisheries, water, nutrition, indigenous peoples, etc. This collaboration has both a knowledge focus and a country-level, operational orientation. An example is gender issues. The gender teams of the three agencies meet regularly to exchange information, coordinate joint activities and prepare joint workplans. On the occasion of International Women's Day, for example, the agencies organize a joint celebration and take turns hosting it. Another example is the use by other RBAs of normative instruments developed by FAO, such as the FAO Ex-Ante Carbon Balance Tool (Ex-ACT). In 2014, IFAD used FAO's Ex-ACT tool to quantify the carbon balance of ASAP-supported investments, and it shared the findings with other partners to strengthen the common knowledge base on greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture. The IFAD-led PARM has also been a good opportunity to reach out to the other RBAs in building coordinated approaches in the nine countries of intervention.
26. IFAD grants to FAO have also been instrumental in developing and identifying technological innovations, building capacities of IFAD's target group, supporting policy processes and generating knowledge in several thematic areas. A recent example is the collaboration with FAO and the International Institute for the Harmonization of Private Law on development of a legal guide on contract farming,

which promotes good practices and fosters the development of enabling contractual environments between farmers and their buyers. Similar examples involve: capacity-building for financial inclusion; the food loss and waste reduction initiative; and the collaborative programme with TCI to strengthen national project implementation capacity in fragile situations (see annex).

D. Corporate

27. Corporate-level collaboration has been of demonstrated benefit in the areas of administrative services and human resource management. This can be taken forward and strengthened in terms of harmonization and rationalization of services and business processes to reduce costs, capitalize on available expertise and increase efficiency. The RBA Inter-Institutional Coordination Committee identified opportunities for collaboration in the common procurement of goods and services for headquarters requirements, joint negotiation of corporate air fares and hotel accommodations, medical services and supplies, and utilities. Harmonization is also being explored in terms of headquarters and field security training, greening initiatives and human resource management, including standardization of staff entitlements. Major human resource initiatives have been taken in terms of pooling temporary staff, harmonization of criteria for testing candidates for General Service staff positions and classification of all General Service staff as internal candidates for the purpose of filling vacancies. Similar treatment of Professional staff vacancies and organized, better-incentivized rotation of Professional staff among RBAs is also being considered, although challenges in this area are greater than at the General Service level.
28. On 27 February 2013, IFAD and FAO entered into a framework agreement setting forth the general principles and terms related to FAO provision of office space, as well as logistical and administrative support to IFAD in establishing country offices. WFP has also been forthcoming in providing office space and services to IFAD in certain countries in which the Fund was establishing an office. IFAD country offices (ICOs) are currently hosted by FAO in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Burundi, Egypt, Madagascar, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda and Sierra Leone and by WFP in Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Niger, Sri Lanka and Zambia. Service-level agreements have been signed or will be formalized with the relevant agency, covering technical and administrative issues aimed at ensuring efficient delivery of corporate services to – and strengthening the functionality of – ICOs. In addition, FAO and IFAD have jointly been allocated common, rent-free office premises by the Government of Ghana. While not a hosting arrangement per se, running costs of the office are shared pro-quota.
29. As IFAD embarks on the establishment of 10 new country offices – following approval by the Executive Board of the revised Country Presence Policy and Strategy in January 2014 – it is expected that the Fund will enter into additional service level agreement(s) with FAO and/or WFP in the next two to three years, thus increasing the level of collaboration among RBAs in areas such as field security, field security training, general administration, human resources, IT support, privileges and immunities. This holds true also for countries enduring severe security threats, where IFAD could profit from FAO/WFP fiduciary management, procurement and oversight systems (in Afghanistan, FAO has been implementing the livestock component of IFAD projects).
30. Directors of information and communication technology services (ICT) at RBAs meet regularly to discuss ICT matters, such as cross-linking of websites, shared access to Intranet sites, coordination of emergency IT facilities, a multi-agency data communications framework for the field, and sharing of IT equipment. Similarly, directors of administrative services meet regularly to discuss and agree on common initiatives, mainly in the areas of travel management, joint procurement, facility management and related services.

31. Internal oversight services have engaged in a number of collaborative initiatives aimed at increasing efficiency: joint auditing of common activities (procurement), staff secondments, joint hosting of United Nations Oversight events (e.g. the 2013 United Nations/IFI annual meeting of the heads of internal audit), joint advertisement and management of common audit and investigation consultant rosters, joint definition of terms of reference and technical evaluation of requests for proposals for framework agreements with audit firms, staff training, and coordination of events by the heads of oversight, audit and investigation.
32. RBAs have been making active efforts to strengthen cooperation in evaluation activities, and signed a joint statement of intent in April 2013 to that effect. Within this context, several joint activities have been undertaken or are being planned. For example, the IFAD and FAO evaluation offices are about to complete a joint evaluation synthesis on pastoral development. A technical seminar on assessing the evaluability of SDG2 is planned for November 2015 (within the framework of the International Year of Evaluation 2015). Other examples include organization of joint training sessions on evaluation methodology (gender, outcome "harvesting", etc.), knowledge-sharing, peer reviews of key evaluations, and support to recruitment processes, etc.

V. Looking forward

33. As the new SDGs shape the evolving development architecture, the Rome-based food and agriculture hub has the potential to become more appealing through claiming leadership on rural poverty eradication, sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition. However, this may require better understanding and retooling of the key features and scope of RBA collaboration, with a greater focus on comparative advantages and complementary approaches.
34. Scope for efficiency gains and enhanced impact:
 - (a) At the operational country level, the scope for enhanced collaboration is broad and to some extent already ongoing, although underreported. Understanding what can be achieved within the limits of existing business models will be key. Opportunities and incentives will need to be assessed and aligned at the country programme level in view of country capacity and existing dialogue.
 - (b) At the global level, there has been important progress on a number of fronts, offering greater clout in international negotiations and advocacy. The biggest challenge will be to develop links with country programmes before global commitments are transformed into deliverables for CPMs. In addition, opportunities for joint communication and messaging may need to be assessed with a view to providing space for approaches tailored to the specificity of each agency.
 - (c) At the thematic/knowledge level, the scope for enhanced collaboration and publications is great, but still mostly driven by individual incentives, accountability systems, budgeting issues or the availability of IFAD grant resources, which are scarce and increasingly used for strategic partnerships.
 - (d) At the corporate level, there has been strong progress over the last two-to-three years in corporate services, human resources and administration, but efforts seem to have reached a plateau, as the establishment of common platforms or systems (payroll, ICT, human resources) may not always be feasible given diverse business models. Two areas possibly offer room for continued enhancement: (i) optimization of arrangements for the sharing of country offices, particularly in view of the IFAD expansion to 10 new offices; and (ii) human resource exchanges and ad hoc arrangements with FAO and WFP. Currently, these are effectively supported by the inter-agency

agreement⁴ and by consultancy contracts. The procedure could be further enhanced and streamlined through an umbrella agreement to expedite administrative steps and shorten processing times.

35. Role of the membership. A discussion with Board members on a vision for RBA collaboration based on the Rome-based food and agriculture hub model would provide a shared understanding of what collaboration entails. The FAO Council and the IFAD and WFP Executive Boards bear special responsibility for ensuring that their respective organizations fulfill their mandates in line with their respective instruments and that they work in synergy. Requests for more collaboration or joint ventures can be a catalyst to formulate better and innovative initiatives and raise additional resources. However, they should be differentiated more and better-supported by evidence that they will enhance delivery efficiency for RBAs and impact for their clients, while at the same time avoiding mission creep, duplication and competition in areas of expertise outside the agencies' comparative advantage. Requests should also be consistent across the governing bodies of the three RBAs so that new requests are managed transparently and in a way that avoids system inefficiencies, loss of opportunities and deviations from core mandates.
36. Business models. IFAD's unique status as a United Nations agency and IFI needs to be fully internalized, as it has major implications for the nature and scope of its collaborative capacity and incentives. The investment lending instrument is an extremely valuable addition to the RBA toolbox and makes the Rome-based food and agriculture hub argument compelling in offering a diversified menu of services to developing countries, beyond what United Nations agencies can typically provide. It also means that, as a lending institution, IFAD works mostly through governments and does not implement its projects itself. To that extent, IFAD is driven by the demand side, which in turn determines the set of incentives for staff to deliver their work programmes. Against this backdrop, collaboration opportunities must be assessed in view of the value that each agency can add to the final product and how it fits within government priorities. In practice, project-level collaboration must occur at the design stage and be carried out jointly with borrowing governments.
37. Leveraging partnership – RBAs and beyond. RBA collaboration is not a sine qua non for attaining institutional objectives, but rather an opportunity to deliver assistance packages in a better or more efficient way. Partners should be identified on the basis of the value they bring to specific contexts. IFAD's search for appropriate partners will extend to IFIs, multilateral and bilateral institutions, private-sector organizations, non-profits and, primarily, community organizations and institutions of the poor in the field. For each agency, RBA collaboration constitutes only a portion of its partnership strategy as a whole. To the extent that each agency becomes a pole of attraction for other partners, the multiple geometry of the Rome hub acquires value. This also means that the case for the RBAs' value-for-money proposition will need to be built on their differences rather than their similarities, and on the network of partners that each has been able to build.
38. Incentive structures and transaction costs. Staff incentives may well be what will make collaboration possible. Strong support and commitment from leadership in each agency will represent a strong basis on which to build incentives. An Award of Excellence: Working Together in the Field was instituted in 2013 and granted for the first time to the Mozambique country teams of the three RBAs, by the agencies' heads, in recognition of their achievements.⁵ However, many of the incentives will be operational and driven by business opportunities. Collaboration is a means to an end and not an end in itself. It requires mutual consultation, coordination and detailed planning and will be judged on its merits (i.e. adding value in a more cost-

⁴ Inter-Organization Agreement concerning Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries, Allowances and Benefits.

⁵ In the Programme for Accelerating Progress towards MDG1c (eradicating hunger) in Mozambique (see annex).

efficient way to benefit the final client). The benefits of collaboration must justify the transaction costs, as it will inevitably require additional steps and time to agree on the substance and to accommodate the different processes (design, division of labour, accountability, timing, supervision, budgeting, reporting, monitoring and evaluation, etc.).

39. **Sharing knowledge.** Learning and knowledge-sharing among RBAs should be supported – in view of the considerable knowledge generated by the three agencies, sometimes with duplication of effort. This area could potentially offer important efficiency gains, particularly in transmitting the outcomes of global policy dialogue and agreements to the country level and in applying them in field operations. Shared knowledge could be the starting point for promoting combined operations in the field, as well as for strengthening policy dialogue with governments, joint advocacy initiatives and awareness-building campaigns. More systematic knowledge-sharing (i.e. by organizing RBA knowledge-sharing events) and increased opportunities for RBA staff to exchange experiences in their respective thematic areas should be pursued. There are already examples of many joint publications, especially with FAO. IFAD could explore the advantages and disadvantages of supporting other joint publications through a more strategic use of its grant programme, subject to a better sense of the impact of the joint publications that have been produced so far.
40. **IFAD grants programme.** FAO is already the largest recipient of IFAD grants, with US\$8 million granted in the last year and a half. The added value of these grants is not always obvious in terms of seeking synergies for enhanced collaboration. Consistent with IFAD's recently approved new Policy for Grant Financing, more attention will be given to supporting combined initiatives more strategically, testing knowledge gained through global processes, and implementing international guidelines (in particular those endorsed by the CFS) and policy frameworks. IFAD grants to FAO or WFP could also provide much more flexibility in jump-starting innovative collaborative ideas and processes in country programmes and possibly leveraging the larger IFAD lending portfolio. But it should be noted that access to IFAD grants will increasingly call for a competitive process.
41. **Institutional mechanisms.** Enhanced RBA collaboration does not imply the establishment of additional formal inter-agency mechanisms and committees. Existing mechanisms should be better used. In addition to regular meetings in which RBA heads discuss and decide on selected strategic/policy issues, the RBA Senior Consultative Group meets roughly every four months, mostly to discuss high-level global issues and initiatives and to agree on targeted annual collaborative priorities. A number of working groups exist on an ad hoc basis for specific undertakings, including the Inter-Institution Services Harmonization Group that looks at corporate issues (human resources, administration), or the working groups established around specific thematic initiatives, such as the P4P initiative, resilience issues, the GPF1 agenda, the food loss and waste reduction initiative, the joint women's empowerment programme, etc. At the decentralized level in particular, country representatives should be the entry points – more than they are today – in identifying opportunities based on existing dialogues with governments, respective areas of interventions and joint planning where feasible. Decisions on when and how to take such country-based collaboration forward at the decentralized level should be left to the purview of country programmes.
42. There are some areas for improving institutional coordination mechanisms:
 - (i) deliberations of the RBA Senior Consultative Group could offer an agenda that is more balanced between following up on decisions made by the principals on global issues and providing guidance and impulse towards the respective operational or service units;
 - (ii) although RBAs jointly serve in CFS discussions, there is no established mechanism for jointly reviewing CFS policy convergence outcomes nor for consulting on how to better contribute to implementation of the

recommendations at country level in their respective operations; and (iii) until now, there has been no dedicated focal point in charge of RBA coordination at IFAD. While effective RBA collaboration should be driven by the specific business units in charge of particular activities, IFAD Management has addressed the need for a more effective oversight, monitoring and reporting system – for the various policy, strategic and operational activities that cut across departments – through nomination of an RBA focal point effective 1 September 2015.

Some examples of country- and programme-level collaboration

1. The collaboration between IFAD and the FAO Investment Centre (TCI) is the longest-standing example of RBA institutional partnership. TCI has been the main interface between IFAD and FAO and the site of more active, regular and country-focused collaboration. However, lack of a structured agreement that would make IFAD requests for TCI support more predictable and stable makes a more dedicated partnership difficult to sustain and programming more challenging. A recent IFAD/FAO initiative on Capacity Development for Better Management of Public Investments in Small-Scale Agriculture in Developing Countries is being implemented by FAO-TCI in the period 2014-2015 through an IFAD grant. This initiative aims to strengthen the implementation performance of certain weak country programmes in nine fragile states.
2. WFP's P4P initiative presents a clear opportunity to link IFAD traditional support to farmers' organizations with a stable potential buyer of staple foods. Some concrete joint activities were developed in Burkina Faso, El Salvador, Mozambique, Rwanda and Zambia, but a more operational partnership and integration into IFAD country programmes should be pursued where possible. However, P4P is also an example that could lead WFP to venture into value chain financing, rural finance, farmers' organizations, market access, infrastructure, etc. – all areas in which WFP does not necessarily have a comparative advantage.
3. The RBA joint Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda illustrates the potential for tapping the expertise of the three agencies in an area of common interest through external financing. A "community of practice" has been launched and food-loss assessments are being carried out in the three countries. These will be followed by mini-grants to scale up tested technologies or processes.
4. The IFAD/WFP Weather Risk Management Facility is a good example of leading-edge research in an area of common interest, using innovative satellite-based products in the design of index insurance for smallholder agriculture. The project focuses on Senegal, but its findings are intended for the entire sub-Saharan region. A number of strategic partners have joined this initiative (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, European Space Agency, Swiss Re, World Bank, United States Agency for International Development, Institut Senegalais de la Recherche Agronomique, etc.) and are keen to use the final output, which could push the frontier of risk mitigation and risk transfer for smallholder farmers.
5. The three RBAs are part of the advisory committee of PARM, and enhanced cooperation takes place at diverse levels. At the country level, risk assessment studies and workshops are being organized (e.g. Ethiopia, Niger and Uganda) with the participation of IFAD, FAO and WFP, together with other organizations and stakeholders. At the global level, FAO and IFAD are engaged in developing e-learning on agricultural risk management, with the participation of experts from WFP and other organizations.
6. The Kenya Cereal Enhancement Programme – Climate Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods (KCEP-CRAL) is a rare example of an IFAD programme being cofinanced by the three RBAs and the European Union in support of a government request. A key feature of the collaboration was to determine the comparative advantage of each partner as follows: (i) WFP provides support to food- and nutrition-insecure farmers, including gradually building productive assets and acquiring agricultural production and agricultural risk management skills to meet basic food needs; (ii) IFAD provides support to subsistence farmers to graduate to market-oriented farming in value chains with market potential, while retaining the diversified livelihood coping strategy supported by WFP. Through the ASAP, IFAD also supports

investments for improved natural resource management and resilience to climate change at all levels; (iii) FAO, throughout this graduation process, will support targeted farmer groups and counties in the adoption of good agricultural practices and conservation agriculture; and (iv) the European Union will sustain expansion of the KCEP by providing additional funding through IFAD – to strengthen institutional capacity to manage droughts and improve food security and livelihood – and by providing a contribution to FAO. The collaboration was made possible owing to: proactive leadership by the decentralized country offices; alignment of incentives; careful programming and budgeting; and assessment of the respective implementation capacities.

7. The Programme for Accelerating Progress towards MDG1c (eradicating hunger) in Mozambique was financed by a EUR 67 million grant from the European Union, complemented by a contribution of EUR 10 million from the Government of Mozambique and jointly implemented by the RBAs. The RBA team designed the programme to tackle the complex issue of food security by leveraging their complementarities. The main areas of intervention were clustered around: access to markets, reduced post-harvest losses and better nutrition (all three RBAs); pro-poor value chains, access to inputs and good agricultural practices (FAO and IFAD); fishery and aquaculture development, rural finance and infrastructure (IFAD); and staple foods fortification (WFP). The design and implementation process was more efficient because beneficiaries and communities were visited by joint teams, saving logistics, time and transport. Considerable trust and mutual reliance was built within the RBA team.
8. The programme for Strengthening Decent Rural Employment Opportunities for Young Women and Men in the Caribbean is an example of effective cooperation between IFAD and FAO. Designed in full coordination in 2014, the programme aims to promote rural youth employment opportunities in the Caribbean by facilitating the development of targeted policies, partnerships and pilot investments, thus generating knowledge to effectively support investments in favour of youth. It was financed mostly by IFAD and implemented by the FAO subregional office for the Caribbean, based in Barbados. The two RBAs joined forces, capitalizing on each agency's comparative advantage: IFAD is investing grant resources in the Caribbean, a highly vulnerable and indebted area, while FAO offers its technical expertise as well as its broad network of country offices – all coordinated by the full-fledged subregional office – to catalyse interest among regional stakeholders (Caribbean governments, sector associations and relevant NGOs) in the issue of youth and rural employment.
9. Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women. Launched in 2012, this five-year joint programme, implemented by the RBAs and UN Women, aims to economically empower rural women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda. Supported by a trust fund open to contributions, the programme capitalizes on each agency's mandate and comparative advantage and focuses on national priorities established in consultative processes with the government of each recipient country. Leadership of the country programme is divided among the participating agencies, which facilitates coordination.
10. Climate. Cooperation with WFP is geared towards a more systematic exchange of risk and vulnerability data, which can be used to inform IFAD investment designs (e.g. in Niger, Sudan and Uganda). To that end, IFAD is sharing the costs of a P-4 level Geographic Information System/earth observation expert with WFP. The border between WFP's FoodSECuRE Facility and IFAD's ASAP programme is the difference between looking at the next impending climate shock and the longer-term transformation of rural space and adaptive capacities.