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IFAD's Contribution to the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AT	Action Track
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FSS	Food Systems Summit
GoFFSS	Group of Friends for the FSS
RBAs	Rome-based agencies
RDR	Rural Development Report
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

I. Background

1. In autumn 2021, on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary-General will convene the Food Systems Summit (FSS) as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. A pre-summit meeting will take place in Rome in July 2021. The three Rome-based agencies (RBAs) – IFAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) – have committed to provide full support for the organization of the pre-Summit and Summit. The FSS will offer a breakthrough moment for large-scale public mobilization around food systems, which is expected to result in actionable commitments to foster and invest in food systems that are sustainable, inclusive, resilient and climate-adapted.
2. Led by Special Envoy Dr Agnes Kalibata, the FSS Secretariat has set up a specific organizational structure that supports the entire process:
 - (i) **Advisory committee.** Chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed, the committee provides strategic guidance and feedback on the Summit’s overall development and implementation. It includes Member State representatives, senior official of relevant United Nations agencies and other international organizations, and a wide range of individual experts from different stakeholder groups.
 - (ii) **Scientific group.** Chaired by Joachim von Braun, Director of the Center for Development Research at the University of Bonn, this is an independent group of leading researchers and scientists from around the world. Its members are responsible for ensuring the robustness, breadth and independence of the science that underpins the Summit and its outcomes.
 - (iii) **United Nations Task Force** is responsible for ensuring the strategic and coordinated engagement of the United Nations system throughout the Summit and its preparatory process. Chaired by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Inger Andersen, membership runs across the United Nations system, as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral organizations. The Chair represents the Task Force on the Summit Advisory Committee.
 - (iv) **Workstreams.** There are nine workstreams bringing together key players from the worlds of science, business, policy, health care and academia, as well as farmers, indigenous peoples, youth organizations, consumer groups, environmental activists and other key stakeholders. Of these workstreams, five are Action Tracks (ATs)¹ delving into topics critical to developing the food systems of the future. The remaining four workstreams comprise the four levers of change, which focus on the cross-cutting areas of gender, finance, innovation and human rights.
3. The FSS Secretariat identified the following as desired outcomes from the Summit:
 - (i) Generate significant action and measurable progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Summit will succeed in identifying solutions and leaders, and will issue a call for action at all levels of the food system, including national and local governments, companies and citizens.
 - (ii) Raise awareness and elevate public discussion about how reforming our food systems can help us all to achieve the SDGs by implementing reforms that are good for people and planet.

¹ AT1 – Ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all
 AT2 – Shifting to sustainable consumption patterns
 AT3 – Boosting nature-positive production at sufficient scales
 AT4 – Advancing equitable livelihoods and value distribution
 AT5 – Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stresses

- (iii) Develop a framework to guide governments and other stakeholders looking to leverage their food systems to support the SDGs. The framework will serve as a road map of what needs to be achieved in order to build fairer, and more sustainable food systems.
- (iv) Create a system of follow-up and review to ensure that the Summit's outcomes continue to drive new actions and progress. This system will allow for the sharing of experiences, lessons and knowledge; it will also measure and analyse the Summit's impact.

II. IFAD's engagement in the Food Systems Summit to date

4. IFAD is the only multilateral development institution focusing exclusively on transforming rural economies and food systems. With its unique identity as an international financial institution and a United Nations specialized agency, IFAD plays a key role in the international development arena in giving a voice to poor, small-scale farmers, producers, women, youth and indigenous peoples and ensuring none are left behind.
5. As it steps up its efforts towards achieving the SDGs, IFAD plans, as part of its Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12) strategic direction, to double its impact by 2030, i.e. help 40 million people a year to increase their incomes. This will be achieved by expanding IFAD's programme of work and enhancing IFAD's development effectiveness and value for money. Furthermore, two new programmes are being introduced – the enhanced Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP+) and the Private Sector Financing Programme – which deliver additional impact directly through their own investments, as well as through their synergies with the programme of loans and grants.
6. The FSS, together with other forums such COP26, provides an important platform through which IFAD can further its strategic direction and provide concrete support to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
7. IFAD has championed the FSS from the onset, contributing to early conversations as the concept was formed, and leading as it came to fruition. As with the other RBAs, the Fund is a member of the Advisory Committee, United Nations Task Force, and the Rome-based Membership Informal Group of Friends for the FSS (GoFFSS). The group is led by Member State co-convenors² who supports the Summit's preparatory process by facilitating information exchange among Members, serving as a sounding board for new ideas and connecting Rome, Nairobi and New York as the three locations where the FSS Secretariat is based.
8. Within the FSS process, IFAD plays a unique role in working closely with the United Nations leadership, individual Member States, a wide range of civil society organizations and the private sector. As an RBA, IFAD has assumed a number of leadership roles in the workstreams, e.g. in AT4 and as a member of the Finance Lever of Change and of the Champions Network. The Fund is the United Nations Anchor Agency for AT4 – advancing equitable livelihoods – and works closely with CARE, the AT Chair, Vice-Chairs WorldFish and the United Nations Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, as well as other members of the AT4 Leadership Group. As the AT4 Anchor Agency, IFAD has provided technical support not only on issues of equitable livelihoods but has also actively engaged with the other ATs, including by designating liaisons for each track, thus ensuring IFAD's interests are represented. IFAD has also been actively leading and participating in a wide range of dialogues spanning several topics in areas of rural agriculture concerning small-scale farmers,

² These are: Alexandra Bugailiskis (Canada); Hisham Badr (Egypt); Ulrich Seidenberger (Germany); Malik Melvin (Malaysia); Benito Jiménez Sauma (Mexico); Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands); Khalid Mehboob (Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council); and Marie Haga (Associate Vice-President, External Relations and Governance Department, IFAD).

indigenous peoples, gender equity, youth, and finance-related issues, particularly around the question of access.

9. As part of its knowledge and policy contribution to the FSS, IFAD is producing the 2021 Rural Development Report (RDR) on Food Systems for Rural Prosperity: Investing in Diversified Livelihood and Entrepreneurship for the Next Generation. The RDR, which is IFAD's flagship publication, will be launched in the lead-up to the FSS and will contribute to IFAD's input into the FSS discussions. In addition, IFAD's operational knowledge, built on its partnerships and dialogue with rural people, will be reflected in its participation in the debates. The 2021 RDR argues that climbing out of poverty and securing a decent livelihood cannot, for most poor rural people, be achieved exclusively through small-scale farming. Therefore, creating equitable livelihoods opportunities for rural people in the midstream of the food system, between production and consumption, and equipping them to tap into opportunities there, will be an increasing focus. At the same time, however, investing in sustainable small-scale agriculture will remain central. The RDR will provide a framework for innovative thinking and for finding practical ways of transforming food systems along these lines. Key emerging messages from the RDR analysis are highlighted in the box below.

Box 1

Emerging policy messages from the 2021 Rural Development Report

- The RDR envisions empowering a new, dynamic class of small agrifood entrepreneurs as the basis for the creation of inclusive livelihoods in rural areas, helping break an intergenerational cycle of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.
- Most economic value in the food system is generated beyond the farm gate, often with little margin for farmers and rural economies. To overcome rural poverty and inequality, more of this value must be created and captured by small-scale producers and rural economies generally to drive better and more diversified livelihood opportunities. Food systems, therefore, have enormous potential to provide new, innovative and diversified rural livelihoods opportunities.
- More attention must be given to the prospects offered by entrepreneurship and enterprises positioned between production and consumption to improve market access for farmers, open up business opportunities and create decent off-farm employment. The global need for more nutritious food, ecosystem services and low-carbon economies also has great potential for new and innovative livelihoods.
- Policies and investments must create incentives for entrepreneurship, guided by principles of inclusion and equity. These must be accompanied by targeted approaches to overcoming the challenges faced by often-excluded groups such as women, youth and indigenous peoples.
- Responding to climate change and enhancing the resilience of food systems and rural households to shocks (e.g. from weather extremes, pest and disease outbreaks, and market anomalies) must be central to the food systems transformation agenda, with particular attention on vulnerable groups.
- Fundamental shifts in market incentives, investments, policies and governance will be needed for an inclusive transformation of food systems that creates decent livelihoods for all; bold and forward-looking political commitments at national and international levels will be essential.

10. The Summit is a cross-cutting priority for IFAD, involving the internal efforts of IFAD's technical specialists in the areas of external relations, finance, programmes, policy and more. In addition, in its role as Anchor Agency, IFAD has also been engaging proactively with representatives of Member States and of the independent science community. As the planning of IFAD's engagement in the Summit moves forward, the views of these stakeholders and the cross-cutting areas will also be taken into account in IFAD's key messages.
11. **Member States and other engagement efforts.** Since the autumn of 2020, IFAD has engaged in, and organized, several events to raise awareness around the FSS. Prioritizing outreach to Member States, IFAD chose to hold its first engagement with them in October 2020. IFAD also ensured that Member States were the first to be consulted on the progress made by AT4 in identifying transformational propositions. In addition to these two consultations with Member States, six additional meetings have taken place with the GoFFSS. As part of the FSS, the group of co-convenors established the friends' group, which serves as a platform to engage Member States in the process and to collect ideas, feedback and

support from the RBA membership. Six additional meetings with the GoFFSS are scheduled for March and April, with IFAD continuing as moderator. Beyond those scheduled, a significant number of additional meetings are anticipated between now and the Summit. Additional bilateral meetings have taken place between the AT4 Chair, IFAD and several Member States who expressed interest in being engaged in the work of the track. In addition, AT4 welcomed interested Member States to serve as honorary members of the Leadership Group to participate in the identification of game-changing propositions.

12. Public engagement efforts began in November 2020 with the presentation of the FSS process during the Global Donor Platform General Assembly (Strengthening Coordination towards SDG2) and the first public dialogue during the Bold Action for Food as a Force for Good, a digital meeting held during the World Economic Forum. These two events started the discussion on what needs to be done to improve food systems. Subsequently, IFAD and CARE have held two consultations with the public and one with the private sector to increase the number of stakeholders engaged, collect feedback on the AT's game-changing propositions, and to share progress with regards to AT4's development of those propositions. A public survey was also launched to solicit new ideas and perspectives.
13. **Food Systems Summit Dialogues.** The FSS Dialogues³ are an extremely important part of the FSS process as they offer a unique way to engage with a broad range of stakeholders, collect ideas, generate actions to ensure food systems transformation and support the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.
14. IFAD has led, co-hosted and participated in a number of dialogues around food systems transformation, youth, women and indigenous peoples' engagement in the FSS process including the issue specific to AT4's thematic focus – advancing equitable livelihoods. More particularly, IFAD co-hosted three dialogues focusing on finance and agriculture and has had senior staff participate in six additional ones. Of the dialogues the Fund helped organize, two were prepared in partnership with the Smallholder and Agri-SME Finance and Investment Network. The first, on 23 February 2021, focused on access to finance for young agripreneurs, while the second, to be held in early April, will focus on women entrepreneurs. Another dialogue, organized by the Food Systems for the Future Institute and other partners, was held on 12 February. At the time of writing, IFAD had co-organized or co-hosted dialogues with a broad range of other organizations including, Rabobank, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Sunnylands, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and others. IFAD will also be working closely with the African Development Bank, UN-Water, WFP, FAO, CGIAR, the International Water Management Institute, the African Union and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa. IFAD anticipates it will continue to be actively engaged in co-hosting and supporting additional dialogues as they arise over the coming months.
15. IFAD, with the FSS Secretariat, is also supporting thematic national dialogues in the Near East and North Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and West and Central Africa regions. These national dialogues are expected to continue through May 2021 and possibly through the end of the year. IFAD anticipates it will continue to support governments in organizing the dialogues at field level, in many instances in collaboration with the other RBAs. IFAD, with the FSS Secretariat, has also announced an initiative to support individual dialogues to ensure that the voices of millions of producers, including small-scale rural producers, women, indigenous peoples and youth, are included in the FSS so that specific solutions can be adopted for them. As part of this initiative, the FSS Secretariat, relying on IFAD's infrastructure, plans to provide financial support to various organizations to conduct dialogues at local level and input their findings into

³ <https://summitdialogues.org/>.

the FSS Dialogues database. These individual dialogues are expected to continue through the end of the year, and are expected not only to gather local insight but also to assist with implementation of possible game-changing propositions at local level.

16. **Game-changing propositions.** One of the main activities of the ATs is to identify game-changing propositions. These are feasible actions, based on evidence, best practices, or a detailed conceptual framework capable of shifting operational models or the underlying rules, incentives, and structures that (i) shape food systems; and (ii) act on multiple parts of – or across – food systems to advance sustainable global goals.
17. The process of identifying game-changers has included seeking ideas from stakeholders through the consultations mentioned above, through a survey, and through several discussions with members of the AT4 Leadership Group. This group has focused its work in particular on identifying propositions that are clustered under the following three categories: empowering people, inclusive policies, productivity and fair share. At one point, a total of more than 70 propositions had been identified for AT4. The AT4 Leadership Group then refined and bundled them before submitting the top 20 to the Secretariat for further integration with proposals from the other ATs. The Secretariat has begun the process of integrating the submissions to identify the top transformational propositions based on the following criteria: (i) impact potential at scale (including return on investment); (ii) actionability (taking into account politics, capacity and costs); and (iii) sustainability (i.e. the ability to keep delivering up to 2030 and beyond). As the FSS Secretariat continues to cluster and strengthen the submissions received to date, it also continues to seek and include new propositions identified through the dialogues as well as submissions of Member States and other stakeholders.
18. IFAD has been championing the need for financial services able to reach all rural communities, not just the 10 per cent currently served. Without financial services, rural people cannot grow their businesses or become more resilient to shocks. Given IFAD's position as a financial institution and its relationship with both multilateral banks and public development banks, the Fund is uniquely positioned to address the accessibility issues that stymie progress in rural areas. As a result, IFAD is working to harness digital technology and the near-universal presence of mobile phones in rural areas to bring in new financial service providers and create innovative financial products designed specifically for rural people. This concept will be further refined and integrated as the FSS progresses.

III. Update on IFAD's financial contribution to the FSS

19. Through a grant approved by the Executive Board in April 2020,⁴ IFAD contributed US\$1.5 million to support the FSS Trust Fund. This amount included the salaries of two staff seconded to the Secretariat at the P4 and P5 levels as well as ongoing activities associated with the FSS Secretariat.
20. In addition to that direct contribution, IFAD has hired one Special Adviser, one Temporary Professional Officer, and one consultant, all part of the External Relations and Governance Department front office, fully dedicated to IFAD's engagement with the FSS.

IV. Looking ahead

21. In January 2021, the FSS Secretariat started preparations for the pre-Summit, which will be hosted by the Italian Government in a hybrid in-person/virtual three-day event at FAO headquarters in Rome on 19-21 July 2021. IFAD is playing an active role in the steering committee overseeing all operational aspects of the planning and execution of the pre-Summit. The event will benefit from the

⁴ [EB 2020/129/R.40](#).

participation of government leaders (heads of state and ministers), United Nations System entities, the organizations leading the work of ATs and Levers of Change, as well as other constituencies, such as the private sector, civil society, producers' organizations, indigenous peoples, youth organizations, and the general public as conditions permit.

22. As the pre-Summit agenda is developed, IFAD will look for opportunities to host or co-host a number of events to ensure that the voices of small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples, women and youth are heard and that AT4's focus on advancing equitable livelihoods is aired during the pre-Summit.
23. Once pre-Summit planning advances, it will inform preparations for the full-scale Summit in New York on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in September. The Summit will issue a Statement of Action by the United Nations Secretary-General as the main outcome document, detailing the main actionable commitments emerging from the preparatory work. The FSS Secretariat has repeatedly emphasized that the Summit will not end in September, but rather will mark the start of new global efforts to achieve the SDG's by 2030. Initiatives are under discussion to track and measure annual progress as well as accountability over the next 10 years.
24. IFAD plans to take a proactive stance in the Summit follow-up. The Statement of Action will be the starting point for the development community to increase their efforts to transform food systems and deliver on the 2030 Agenda. In this space, IFAD will continue to leverage its comparative advantage and work closely with small-scale farmers to ensure that no one is left behind. The FSS critically aligns with IFAD12's strategic direction and intent to double impact by 2030. The post-Summit activities will provide an additional opportunity to demonstrate IFAD's unique role as a United Nations specialized agency and international financial institution, as well as a leader in development finance.