
Report on operational items discussed at the Executive Board consultation on 1 September

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Action: The Executive Board is invited to take note of the report.

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I. Introduction

1. The Executive Board met virtually on 1 September 2025 for pre-consultations on the batch of country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) submitted for the Board's online review and projects/programmes and grant proposals submitted for its approval at the upcoming Executive Board session in September. The consultation was held to enable Member States to engage in an in-depth discussion of the items ahead of their presentation at the Board session. The consultation complements the individual written comments shared by Membership with country teams, to which country teams provide written responses.
2. The items discussed included two investment projects, two COSOPs (one of which was accompanied by a country strategy and programme evaluation) and three grants to the private sector. The COSOPs under review were for Rwanda and Somalia and the investment proposals were for projects in Cambodia and Fiji. The three private sector grants focused on Tajikistan in the Near East, North Africa and Europe region; Nigeria in the West and Central Africa region and Kenya, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda in the East and Southern Africa region.
3. In attendance at the session were representatives from 15 Member States on the Executive Board,¹ along with representatives from six other Member States.² Some of the latter representatives took the floor when the COSOPs and projects for their respective countries were discussed. Representatives of Indigenous Peoples and the European Union also attended as observers.
4. The consultation was chaired by the Associate Vice-President, Department for Country Operations, and attended by the Managing Director, Office of Technical Delivery, directors of the relevant divisions, country directors, project technical leads, the Secretary of IFAD and other IFAD staff. The consultation comprised one morning session.
5. Delegates were generally very supportive of the projects and COSOPs. They raised some queries and provided strategic and technical feedback to the teams. Management thanks Membership for their active engagement and thoughtful observations and queries. In addition, Member States are invited to contact the project team for written responses should they have further questions. The discussion focused on the following issues:
 - **Agroecology.** Member States encouraged a stronger narrative on the inclusion of agroecological approaches in promoting climate-resilient agriculture. As noted by the Director, Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division (ECG), Management confirmed that agroecological practices were being integrated across projects, with a particular emphasis on reducing methane emissions and ensuring that they were monitored and reported on.
 - **Nutrition-sensitive agriculture.** Member States called for enhanced mainstreaming of nutrition-sensitive value chains across IFAD's portfolio. Management acknowledged the comments and noted that teams were working on identifying proposals that responded to both government demand and IFAD's investment priorities.
 - **Gender equality and women's empowerment.** Member States stressed the need to go beyond mainstreaming to ensure that women played active

¹ Executive Board representatives: Algeria, Angola, Austria, Canada, China, Finland, France, Germany, Mexico, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

² Cambodia, Fiji, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Rwanda and Somalia.

roles in governance, decision-making and value chain development. While welcoming IFAD's gender and inclusion plans, they called for measurable outcomes, particularly on women's participation in irrigation governance and access to productive assets and urged greater efforts to position women as leaders in water users' associations and value chains. Management confirmed that gender-transformative approaches, including household methodologies such as the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), would be applied to strengthen women's voice and agency in decision-making bodies.

- **Local-level planning and governance mechanisms.** Member States welcomed IFAD's emphasis on participatory planning and asked for clearer articulation of how the inclusion of marginalized groups was ensured. Management underscored that this was operationalized through IFAD's Poverty Targeting Policy and Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) and that grievance redress mechanisms had been strengthened in recent years to facilitate community monitoring of projects.
- **Private sector engagement, financial services and digital penetration.** Member States requested clearer articulation of how IFAD, through its investments across both projects and COSOPs, engaged with the private sector. Concerns were also raised about reaching marginalized groups, especially women. Management noted the ongoing efforts to strengthen private sector engagement through sovereign and non-sovereign operations, which were already reflected in the new generation of projects, and acknowledged the need to report on these efforts more clearly. Management further reiterated that IFAD's Poverty Targeting Policy applied to all operations and emphasized the data protection and privacy safeguards in place. IFAD's Personal Data Protection and Privacy Guidelines ensured that data collected and used in IFAD operations were managed inclusively, ethically and securely.
- **Cambodia.** Member States requested strengthened fiduciary oversight, operations and maintenance, and sustainability arrangements, and closer coordination among the three financiers to ensure effective and transparent monitoring. Management confirmed that the project delivery team would ensure that the project implementation manual adequately addressed these issues.
- **Fiji.** Member States expressed concerns about project management challenges. Management assured them that this was a central focus during quality assurance and that the risk mitigation plan included comprehensive measures. Management further explained the rationale for adopting the multiphase adaptive programme (MAP) approach, given the limited investment envelope and the project's long-term development vision.
- **Somalia.** Member States expressed support for the COSOP, particularly the incorporation of a fragility approach. Management reaffirmed IFAD's focus on long-term investment in natural resources management and on capacity-building for local and community institutions, which contributed to the humanitarian–development nexus approach.
- **Rwanda.** Member States endorsed the COSOP and welcomed its alignment with national priorities, while seeking clarification on the planned contingency fund and on private sector engagement. IFAD explained that the fund, designed to support rapid responses to shocks in the livestock sector, was under development with the Government and partner institutions and confirmed plans for three non-sovereign investments to de-risk private finance.
- **Grants.** Member States welcomed the innovative focus on remittances, digital farmer registries and green finance, while emphasizing the need for stronger

equity, safeguards, measurable impact and sustainability. Management confirmed that gender-transformative approaches would be central, that government endorsement and integration with national systems would support scaling up and that capacity-building for intermediaries and borrowers was aimed at embedding lasting green finance practices in East Africa.

II. Summary of proposals and discussions

A. Asia and the Pacific

Cambodia – Climate Adaptive Irrigation and Sustainable Agriculture for Resilience (CAISAR) (EB 2025/145/R.2)

6. Member States welcomed CAISAR's focus on climate-resilient agriculture, inclusive market development and strong cofinancing partnerships. They stressed the importance of irrigation sustainability, women's participation, nutrition, agroecology, ICT, provincial and commune-level engagement, synergies with partners and fiduciary risk management. IFAD confirmed that these aspects would be integrated, noting that irrigation sustainability would be supported through an operations and maintenance fund and local management structures; that agroecological practices included diversification to vegetables, poultry and aquaculture; that provinces and communes would play active implementation roles; and that women would participate in water users' associations. Fiduciary risks would be mitigated through training at start-up and adherence to the Government's standard procedures for internationally funded projects. Consultations would be held at the outset with partners in the target areas.

Fiji – Multiphase adaptive programme: Blue Economy and Green Community Development (BE-GREEN) (EB 2025/145/R.3)

7. Membership welcomed BE-GREEN, underscoring the importance of learning from past project challenges, strengthening private sector involvement and integrating gender, youth and climate adaptation. They raised questions about the rapid disaster response component, coordination with other initiatives, the remittance pilot, the financing gap and concessional financing terms. In response, IFAD explained that the financing was highly concessional and aligned with the International Monetary Fund/World Bank debt sustainability analysis. The financing gap could be addressed by IFAD (through the performance-based allocation system and Borrowed Resource Access Mechanism), bilateral partners or the Global Environment Facility. The remittance pilot would develop financial products tailored to women, youth and remitters. Key partners such as the World Bank had already been consulted. A project implementation manual would guide operationalization of the disaster response component. Finally, lessons from previous projects had informed the design, leading to improved procurement and decentralized management arrangements.

B. East and Southern Africa

Rwanda – Country strategic opportunities programme (EB 2025/OR/7 + Add.1) and country strategy and programme evaluation (EC 2024/124/W.P.2/Rev.1)

8. The representative for Rwanda expressed his Government's endorsement of the COSOP. Member States sought clarification regarding the planned contingency fund and private sector engagement. IFAD explained that the fund, which was under development, was intended to support rapid responses to shocks in the livestock sector through contributions. On private sector engagement, Management confirmed strong demand from the Government, with IFAD responding through three planned non-sovereign investments and greater leveraging of the sovereign portfolio to de-risk private investments.

C. Near East, North Africa and Europe

Somalia – Country strategic opportunities programme (EB 2025/OR/5)

9. The representative for Somalia conveyed his Government's strong support for the country's first COSOP. Member States welcomed the quality of the fragility assessment and the inclusive consultation process. IFAD clarified that private sector investment was integrated into value chains (e.g. seeds); that women's empowerment and nutrition were addressed through mainstreaming; and that safeguards included a grievance redress mechanism for gender-based violence. Third-party implementation would strengthen agricultural and environmental institutions by clarifying roles and building capacity. Digital financial services would reach marginalized groups. Financial illiteracy would be mitigated using group approaches. Supervision would be hybrid, and coordination would be ensured through a proxy field officer presence and a Ministry of Agriculture focal point. IFAD noted that Somalia currently receives grants; however, if macroeconomic indicators improved, harder lending terms could apply under the Fourteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD14) following a debt sustainability analysis.

D. Grants to the private sector

Remittances for Resilience – Financial Access and Economic Empowerment for Returnees and Rural Communities in Tajikistan (EB 2025/145/R.4)

10. Member States welcomed the grant, noting its innovative integration of remittances, financial inclusion and climate adaptation. One representative commended its alignment with national strategies and IFAD's Community-based Agricultural Support Project Plus (CASP+), while recommending greater equity, tailored financial literacy and reinforced safeguards. Questions were raised about matching grant accessibility, behavioural change from financial literacy and women's role in governance. IFAD explained that the matching grants were designed to demonstrate new approaches; that financial literacy would be delivered through a mix of digital and in-person tools using Arvand Bank's expanded agent network; and that women – the main recipients of remittances – would play a key role in both product design and governance.

Open Agri Connect – Enabling Private Sector Investment and Access to Services for Smallholder Farmers through Digital Farmer Registry (EB 2025/145/R.5)

11. Open Agri Connect was positively received for its timeliness and alignment with IFAD's mandate. One representative emphasized the need to demonstrate end-user benefits, raise awareness and promote inclusion amid digital challenges, while another stressed the importance of equitable access, integration with national systems, data protection and impact measurement. IFAD confirmed the endorsement of the Governments of Nigeria and Rwanda, which would ensure sustainability and integration. Farmer registries would be aligned with IFAD projects and national systems, with particular attention to the inclusion of women and youth. A monitoring framework would be used to track registrations and service uptake through private sector partnerships. The grant complied with global data protection standards, and awareness-raising and capacity-building activities would support scaling up.

Grant to Equity Bank Kenya Limited for the Africa Rural Climate Adaptation Finance Mechanism (ARCAFIM) (EB 2025/145/R.6)

12. A question was raised about the sustainability of ARCAFIM's benefits. Management clarified that with strong capacity-building for financial intermediaries and end-borrowers, the initiative aimed to shift East Africa's finance sector towards greater green lending in agriculture. Based on ARCAFIM's success, it was expected that the host bank and other providers would continue similar lending activities in the long term.