



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



RBA Senior Consultative Group

Follow-up session on COVID-19

IFAD HQ (Zoom)

Wednesday, 13 May 2020, 15.00-16.00

Key Messages

- 1) IFAD welcomed FAO and WFP to the 2nd 2020 RBA Senior Consultative Group (SCG) meeting - follow-up session on COVID-19, hosted and chaired by IFAD virtually via Zoom. The session focused on three agenda items: i) general updates on the recent and forthcoming agencies' governing body meetings; ii) brief updates on COVID-19 measures; and iii) RBA COVID-19 pillars of coordination.
- 2) IFAD and WFP updated the SCG on the main outcomes of their respective Executive Board meetings held in April, and informed the Group on the COVID-19 response instruments put in place by the organizations. In particular, the IFAD Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF), to quickly channel investments into response activities in agricultural inputs, market access, rural finance and digital information services, and the WFP actions focusing on the Advocacy and Operational spheres. WFP interventions such as: i) cash-based transfers; ii) school feeding programmes; and iii) food systems support. In addition, WFP reported on the Members' request to receive oral updates on WFP's response to COVID-19, and as such will be providing monthly updates to their membership.

FAO informed the Group that the 164th Session of the Council scheduled for the beginning of June was postponed to the last week of June, while the Programme and Finance Committee meeting will be held in mid-June¹. In this context, the FAO 2020-21 Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget document, which will be reviewed and approved during the Council, proposes structural and programmatic adjustments for the Organization to become more flexible, agile and efficient.

In terms of Advocacy and Policy advice, various tool kits were developed to help country offices deliver the support governments are requesting. Among these, a collection of policy briefs is being issued by FAO on COVID-19 impact, striving to ensure the health emergency does not turn into a food crisis. FAO and WFP's humanitarian response is largely framed within the UN Global Humanitarian Response plan (GHRP) for COVID-19 response, which has been revised to scale up such responses beyond the health sector. In particular, employment in rural areas and food systems are receiving specific attention, with an increase of food security components and senior investment programmes, put in place in collaboration with IFIs. In this regard, a brief has been prepared, with inputs from WFP, for the UN Secretary-General to advocate on the challenges and the risks of food system impact.

Particular emphasis was placed on the virtual format of the above-mentioned governing body sessions, which in all cases was very successful. Given that the software used by WFP proved to be very efficient, the SCG unanimously agreed on the need to share virtual systems and solutions, which should be further explored in the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), as they may become the new norm for future meetings.

Concerning Business Continuity, all three agencies are planning for a smooth and cautious return to work, based on the recommendations and in close coordination with the Government

¹ The meetings have been rescheduled as follows: the [128th Session of the Programme Committee](#) will be held from 8-17 June, in parallel with the [180th Session of the Finance Committee](#). The 164th Session of the FAO Council will take place 6-10 July.

of Italy. FAO in particular stressed its willingness in changing the Organization's culture and transforming it into a more digital organization. The SCG agreed on the importance of continued exchange of information and coordinating on Business Continuity good practices. The Group also agreed on the need to have a future discussion on COVID-19's overall impact on the work of the agencies, taking into consideration how the new tools and software are transforming the organizations.

3) In summary, it was decided that:

- i) Transformation into a digital and smoother organization of work is a common agenda to the three RBAs. The RBA Governing Body Secretariat services will meet and exchange views to achieve this objective;
- ii) RBAs will continue exchanging and coordinating on COVID-19 Business Continuity good practices;
- iii) The RBAs are reviewing their agency specific interventions related to COVID-19 and are determining where enhanced collaboration will bring added value;
- iv) The next SCG meeting will be chaired by WFP and convened in July (TBC).