



Concept note

Sahel, a land of opportunities

Regional integration, and joint effort through regional operations du Programme conjoint Sahel en réponse aux défis COVID-19, Conflits et Changements climatiques (SD3C and Great Green Wall financing)

Forty-fifth session of IFAD's Governing Council – Virtual side event (webinar)

Tuesday, 15 February 2022 1 p.m. – 2.30 p.m. (Central European Time)

Background

The Sahel, meaning “the shore of the desert”, is a vast area crossing 6,000 kilometres from East to West Africa. It covers many geographical and agro-ecological systems, 12 countries and is home to 400 million people.

The political region of the Sahel, as defined by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), covers a smaller area: 10 countries (Senegal, The Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria) with a total population of 250 million. The region is severely affected by conflict and climate change.

Climate change threatens to further degrade land, vegetation, water resources and food systems through increased drought, desertification, floods and a projected shorter rainy season. The Sahel ecological zone has shifted from 50 to 200 kilometres southward over the last three decades, resulting in the loss of biodiversity and arable land.

The region is affected by political instability, which has weakened the livelihoods of households, threatened the sovereignty and stability of States and undermined social peace.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the burden on countries' economies and slowed down food production systems, putting the most vulnerable people at risk.

Opportunities for growth. The population of the Sahel is projected to grow from 250 million to 500 million by 2050. The region is also home to the youngest population in the world, with 65 per cent under 25 years old. With the right support, this offers market growth opportunities for local producers.

Improved governance and cross-border cooperation between countries and local communities can foster development, integration and better trade schemes. To achieve this, it is important to harness the potential of the region's abundant human, cultural and natural resources.

Investing in the future. IFAD's overall strategy in the region is aligned with the UNISS, which targets the root causes of the Sahel crisis across 10 countries, with a special focus on women, youth and persons with disabilities.

IFAD is increasing its presence and support in the Sahel, with 27 ongoing projects amounting to US\$2 billion in investments across the 10 countries. The current portfolio is reinforced by financing through the Green Climate Fund's Great Green Wall Umbrella Programme, which is focused on strengthening the resilience of small-scale farmers and producers to the impacts of climate change.

In 2020, IFAD, FAO and WFP joined forces with the G5 Sahel Secretariat to support the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme. Together, the four institutions developed the SD3C in response to the challenges of COVID-19, conflict and climate change (US\$180.4 million including GCF funding over 6 years). The programme is currently under implementation in six countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal).

Panel for the 2022 Governing Council informal event

The panel discussion will focus on the relevance of using joint regional operations and financing that bring together key players in the Sahel to harness opportunities and resolve challenges in the region.

The panel will be composed of:

- The Executive Secretary of G5 Sahel: H.E. Eric Tiare Yemdaogo (TBC)
- 1 Representative from FAO
- 1 Representative from IFAD: Benoit Thierry, Head , IFAD Multicountry Office and country representative in Senegal
- 1 Representative from WFP
- 1 Alternate Governor: H.E. Papa Abdoulaye Seck, Ambassador of Senegal to Italy and Permanent Representative of Senegal to Rome-based agencies (TBC)
- 1 Representative of the Programme Coordinator

A 3-minute video depicting SD3C activities will be presented.

Moderator: Ms Ndaya Beltchika, Lead Technical Specialist – Gender and Social Inclusion, IFAD

Welcome remarks: Mr Donal Brown, Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department (PMD)

Main themes and questions:

- Change of narrative needed for the Sahel
- SD3C: a joint Rome-based agencies collaboration
- SD3C: bringing together countries on food systems issues including youth
- The role of regional institutions and regional farmers' organizations
- Great Green Wall Initiative