Investing in rural people

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Progress report on Rome-based agencies collaboration

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Action: The Governing Council is invited to take note of the progress report on Rome-based agencies collaboration.

Technical questions:

Ronald Hartman
Director
Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division
e-mail: r.hartman@ifad.org

Maija Peltola
Senior Partnership Officer
Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division
e-mail: m.peltola@ifad.org

I. Introduction

A. Purpose and scope

1. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP) have jointly prepared this annual progress report for 2023-2024 to highlight the coordinated efforts of the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) over the past year. The report details key achievements that have resulted from their collaborative actions at global, regional, and country levels.

2. This document reflects on the priority areas outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)[1] and incorporates insights from the Follow-up Report on the Joint Evaluation of Collaboration between the RBAs. It focuses on the ongoing strategic alignment and collaborative initiatives of the three agencies, particularly their collective contributions to enhancing food security and transforming agrifood systems.

3. Section I of the report introduces the collaborative efforts of the RBAs for 2023-2024, emphasizing strategic initiatives and joint actions aligned with the MoU's priorities. Section II provides examples of coordination by FAO, IFAD, and WFP across various levels and their contributions to youth development, innovation, and the outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems Summit. Section III charts a pathway forward for collaboration, considering the current global context and the RBAs strategic priorities and plans to enhance their collective role in advancing food security and agrifood system transformation.

B. Overview of collaboration 2023-2024

4. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2024 report reveals a persistent global food insecurity landscape, with approximately 9.1% of the world's population – up to 757 million people – experiencing hunger, a significant increase from pre-pandemic levels. The SOFI report itself is a testament to strong RBA collaboration, as its creation brings the agencies together through the exchange of intelligence, data, and expertise, while coordinated communications efforts enhance its visibility and further strengthen inter-agency cooperation. Hunger continues to rise in Africa, particularly in Central and West Africa, while it has stabilized in Asia and improved in Latin America. Africa faces the most severe impact, with 20.4% of its population affected, compared to 8.1% in Asia. Additionally, 28.9% of the global population – about 2.33 billion people – face moderate or severe food insecurity, with a slightly narrowed but significant gender gap. The affordability of a healthy diet also impacts over one-third of the global population, particularly in low-income countries. The report calls for urgent resource mobilization and a more coordinated approach to financing food security and nutrition to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

5. Reflecting on the new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in August 2023, this report underscores the strengthened collaboration among the RBAs to tackle the challenges reflected in the most recent SOFI reports. The "Follow-up Report on the Joint Evaluation of Collaboration between the RBAs", presented to FAO's Evaluation Committee in early 2024, highlights the significant progress made in the six key thematic areas of the MoU: agrifood

[1] Agri-food systems; nutrition; gender equality and women's empowerment; resilience building; youth; climate change, environment and biodiversity; joint corporate services.

systems, nutrition, gender equality, resilience building, youth, and climate change. Building upon these positive steps, this report showcases how the RBAs have realigned their strategies and enhanced their contributions to the United Nations Development System (UNDS), emphasizing the need for a coordinated approach to tackling global food security challenges. It also details the implementation of recommendations focused on optimizing coordination, advancing joint programming, and aligning administrative processes within the United Nations efficiency agenda.

6. The RBAs continue to engage collaboratively in high-level political forums such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC), and follow-up activities related to the United Nations Food Systems Summit. They have developed joint and complementary messaging to raise awareness about the global food security crisis and highlight the challenges of achieving food security and nutrition in the context of the SDGs. The successful execution of the United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 (UNFSS+2), supported by the RBAs, has also provided a crucial platform for countries to share their food systems journeys and emphasized the need to accelerate progress, particularly in access to financing, debt relief, and increased liquidity for crises-affected developing countries.

II. 2023-2024 RBA Collaboration Across Global, Regional and Country Levels

7. RBA collaboration continues at all levels and across thematic areas of focus in order to transform agrifood systems and achieve Zero Hunger. The five-year tripartite MoU establishes a framework that includes a steadfast focus on results, and ensures sustained exchange of technical knowledge, lessons learned, and good practices.

8. This chapter provides a substantive overview of collaboration activities at the global and corporate levels, as well as a status of selected country and regional level work, during the 2023-2024 reporting period. To visualize the work of the RBAs and demonstrate the nature of collaboration, several in depth examples are presented. These include: recent developments in the CFS, GNAFC, and other key processes, such as the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), UNGA and Summit of the Future, G7, G20, UNFCCC and COPs; collaboration on the UNFSS follow-up; updates on the Food Security Cluster (FSC), Joint Sahel Programme (SD3C), joint programmes on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as on collaboration around South-South and Triangular Cooperation; case studies on RBA collaboration in nutrition, youth, and innovation; and country-level collaboration in Kenya, as well as within the UNSDCF processes and United Nations Efficiency Agenda.

A. Highlights of collaboration activities at global level

a) Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

9. In 2023, FAO, IFAD and WFP advanced their joint work and collaboration within the CFS,[2] contributing to its strategic direction through regular engagement in the Bureau and Advisory Group meetings and thematic workstreams. The RBAs host and support the CFS Secretariat, providing staff, technical expertise, and leveraging their convening power to develop and endorse policy recommendations across a wide range of Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) related thematic areas, in particular, this year providing technical support in the policy convergence process on the development of recommendations on "Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition".

[2] The CFS is composed of 139 members including member states, civil society, farmers organizations, and the Rome Based Agencies.

10. During the reporting period, the RBAs continued to promote and mainstream the CFS policy products within their respective workplans as instruments for accelerating progress on the implementation of the SDGs.

11. As a result of their collective engagement within the CFS, the RBAs have actively engaged in and supported the development of a four-year (2024-2027) Multi-Year Programme of Work for the Committee, which received approval during the CFS 51st Plenary Session (CFS 51), underscoring the significance of the RBA collaborative efforts. The RBAs provided technical guidance during the negotiations of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition, which were endorsed in November 2023.

12. Going forward, with strong RBA support and engagement, the CFS will continue to be an important space where global multi-stakeholder actors strive together for the elimination of hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all.

b) Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC)

13. The GNAFC is an alliance of humanitarian and development actors committed to tackling the root causes of food crises and promoting sustainable solutions. In January 2024, IFAD, UNHCR, and UNICEF became members, and the GNAFC has become the key platform for RBA collaboration in food crises and famines. Key results achieved in 2024 include:

- Reports and evidence: The knowledge products published were the 'Global Report on Food Crises', the 'Hunger Hotspots Report', the 'Financial Flows and Food Crises Report', as well as tailored reports on specific country and regional contexts and priority issues.[3] The GNAFC is also investing in knowledge management efforts among its members, and has created a 'Knowledge Hub' in 2024.
- Strategic dialogues and advocacy: Collective messages have been distributed on nutrition, famine prevention, social protection, displacement, conflict, and climate. Strategic discussions on global food insecurity and famine risk have been organized with policy makers in the Economic and Social Council Humanitarian Affairs Segment, with high-level United Nations officials and representatives of United Nations Member States in New York, and the European Humanitarian Forum.
- Country engagement: Working closely with regional bodies in East and West Africa, GNAFC has supported national governments and Food Systems Summit convenors, as well as humanitarian and development partners, to strengthen Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus approaches and support the identification of joint plans and collective outcomes to tackle food insecurity through strengthening food systems. Additionally, IFAD's 3FS tool for measuring financial flows to food systems is being promoted.
- Famine prevention: A series of high-level policy dialogues were organized in partnership with Tufts University aimed at building a shared understanding of famine prevention and fostering innovative approaches to addressing its drivers. Regular updates on Resolution 2417 have been provided to United Nations Security Council members.

[3] Joint FAO/WFP update for the United Nations Security Council on food security in Palestine and the Sudan.

- Partnerships: The GNAFC hosts the HDP Nexus Coalition, ensuring that evolving perspectives of national convenors and actors are integrated into dialogues on food crises. The Coalition's member-led workstreams continue to facilitate a community of practice for national convenors from countries affected by conflict and food crises, to develop joint advocacy messages and organize high-level events and dialogues, and to work with a multisectoral consortium of seven research institutes. In addition to the Coalition, partnerships and collaboration with the g7+, G7, and G20 have been significantly strengthened and expanded, as well as the UNFSS Coordination Hub and other platforms and initiatives related to addressing food crises, promoting a common narrative on food crises and in facilitating discussions on solutions.

c) Maximizing efficiencies and complementarities in nutrition: UN-Nutrition (MoU's thematic area #2)

14. As a United Nations inter-agency coordination and collaboration mechanism for nutrition at global and country level, UN-Nutrition brings together United Nations system entities to effectively address malnutrition in all its forms. The RBAs, together with WHO and UNICEF, are founding members of UN-Nutrition, and members of its Steering Committee.

15. In 2023 and 2024, the RBAs collaborated to deliver on the *UN-Nutrition Strategy 2022-2030* and other priority areas, including aligned advocacy and policy coherence, strategic coordination, knowledge management and innovation, and translation of global guidance into country-level actions and guidelines. In particular, UN-Nutrition members focused on the following priorities: (1) Promote and facilitate United Nations country teams' coordination in nutrition; (2) Healthy diets from sustainable food systems; (3) Private sector engagement for nutrition results.

16. RBA collectively contributed to the update and release of the *Guidance Note (2023) on Nutrition for United Nations country teams, their government counterparts and other stakeholders*, in support of the integration of nutrition into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. FAO, IFAD and WFP also provided technical inputs to the development of a UN-Nutrition discussion paper *Nutrition and the environment – Nurturing people, protecting the planet*. Furthermore, the RBAs have engaged in UN-Nutrition's Private Sector Task Team, currently supporting a process led by the United Nations Food Systems Hub to develop a Corporate Accountability Framework in the context of Food Systems Transformation. They have also undertaken joint advocacy efforts to promote healthy diets from sustainable food systems.

d) United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (MoU's thematic area #5)

17. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) plays a pivotal role in promoting collaboration among United Nations entities and other stakeholders to support global youth empowerment, aligning closely with the objectives outlined in the MoU between the RBAs, particularly in thematic area #5, which focuses on "Promoting Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas".

18. A primary synergy between IANYD and the RBAs is enhancing youth participation in agricultural and rural economies, with IANYD coordinating United Nations-wide strategies to encourage youth involvement in policy-making and decision-making processes. This engagement is vital for incorporating young voices into development projects, ensuring their perspectives and needs are addressed. Activities include organizing fora, e.g. the annual ECOSOC youth forum and workshops for youth to interact with policymakers and initiatives promoting youth leadership in community development. Supporting youth entrepreneurship is another key focus, with IANYD and the RBAs offering capacity-building programs that equip young people with the skills and knowledge to start and manage businesses, including promoting new business ideas, training in business management,

access to finance, and mentorship schemes. The RBAs specifically target rural youth, helping them seize opportunities in agriculture and related sectors, fostering economic independence and sustainable rural development.

19. The Decent Work for Equitable Food Systems Coalition, launched by IFAD, ILO, and CARE International, complements these efforts by advocating for fair labor practices within food systems, supported by a diverse network of over 200 stakeholders globally. This coalition engages in policy advocacy, research dissemination, and the development of guidelines and standards for decent work, with technical contributions from FAO.

20. As IFAD reviews and updates its Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP) for 2025-2030 and FAO starts to update its RYAP in 2025, consultations with key stakeholders will be conducted to ensure the integration of best practices and successful models from existing youth programs. This collaborative approach enhances the alignment of RBA efforts with global youth development strategies, maximizing the effectiveness and reach of their programs.

e) Innovation and the RBAs

21. In line with the United Nations 2.0 Quintet of Change agenda, innovation is at the heart of RBAs institutional strategies to address the complex challenges facing global agriculture, food security, and rural development. The RBAs have contributed to the planning of the United Nations Behavioural Science Week, sharing results from individual pilots during the June 2024 event.

22. As part of Moonshots for Development alliance, IFAD and the WFP Innovation Accelerator in collaboration with other entities such as, the Asian Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, launched the Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Climate Resilience in Rural Areas innovation programme in 2023. The initiative selected and supported innovations addressing climate resilience in rural areas through AI.

23. FAO partnered with IFAD on capacity building and thought leadership through courses offered by the European Institute of Innovation for Sustainability (EIIS), upskilling innovators for agrifood system transformation. In 2024, they also promoted RBA messaging on behavioural science to EIIS students.

24. In January 2024, FAO visited the WFP Innovation Accelerator to learn and get inspiration as they set up and strengthened their newly set-up innovation function.

25. Furthermore, the United Nations Advisory Alliance, hosted by WFP, supported FAO by conducting a skills assessment for the organization's Office of Innovation (OIN). The project included qualitative and quantitative analysis, literature review, internal and external interviews, and a survey with OIN's staff. As a result, FAO received a comprehensive list of key skills and knowledge domains for OIN, an assessment of main strengths and priority gaps, as well as benchmarking studies and profile descriptions for open positions focused on closing the priority gaps identified.

26. To facilitate knowledge sharing within the development ecosystem, under the framework of UNHRD's yearly Global Partner Meeting, the SDGx team of the WFP Innovation Accelerator organized and facilitated a two-day workshop for UNHRD's partners worldwide, including members of FAO.

27. The RBA Innovation teams continue to connect and collaborate on innovation via the RBA Innovation taskforce and bilaterally.

f) Update on the United Nations Food Systems Summit follow-up (MoU's thematic area #1)

28. The United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub) provides systemic, country-driven, and customized support to translate national commitments into effective actions aimed at achieving sustainable food systems by 2030, leveraging the broader United Nations system. Since the 2021 Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), 127 countries have adopted national pathways (up from 111 in 2021), and 155 Food Systems National Convenors have been appointed to support follow-up actions.

29. As the organizer of the United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2), the Hub continues to serve as an innovative policy space where the RBAs demonstrate effective interagency collaboration to accelerate systems change. The preparations for UNFSS+2 saw substantial global participation, with 108 countries submitting voluntary progress reports.

30. The recently established Biennial Work Plan for 2024-2026 will guide the Hub's efforts in fostering institutional innovation, enabling the operationalization of all agencies' perspectives and expertise in support of over 150 countries. Under the Work Plan, the RBAs will focus on five coordination clusters: Policy and Governance, Science and Knowledge, Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration, Finance and Investment, and the overarching cluster "Landing the Vision," which prepares for the next follow-up event in 2025 (UNFSS+4).

31. Examples of recent interagency collaboration are the development of a tool to track Financial Flows to Food Systems (3FS), co-led by IFAD and the World Bank in collaboration with the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub. The 3FS aims at providing decision makers with evidence on the scale and scope of financial flows to food systems at the country and global levels to inform impactful decisions and foster mutual accountability for transformative financing to food systems. Moreover, all RBAs contributed as key advisors in developing the Convergence Initiative on climate change and were strategic partners in organizing five 2024 regional meetings, as preparatory dialogues for the UNFSS+4.

32. This collaborative effort is crucial in responding to the United Nations Secretary-General's Call to Action for Accelerated Food Systems Transformation to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

g) RBA collaboration in other processes/high-level political fora (including HLPF, UNGA/Summit of the Future, G7, G20, UNFCCC/COPs)

33. The RBAs actively engage in high-level political forums, including the G7, G20, UNFCCC/COPs, and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), to advance shared goals. Under the G7 Italian Presidency, the RBAs reaffirmed their collective role as a global food security hub, promoting a G7 focus on sustainable and inclusive agrifood systems. FAO, with active contribution from WFP and United Nations OCHA, have designed and presented to the G7 members under the Italian Presidency, the Financing for Shock-Driven Food Crises (FSFC), which was included under the Apulia G7 Leaders Declaration in June 2024. IFAD will consider ways to engage with the facility, building on its IFAD13 focus on resilience in fragile contexts.

34. The RBAs continue to collaborate closely on the production of technical notes and policy papers to inform the G20 members' deliberations and promote policies and actions that foster global food security and nutrition.

35. The RBAs are integral to the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, set to be formalized at the G20 Leaders' Summit in November 2024 under the Brazilian G20 Presidency. With a Rome-based Support Mechanism, this initiative leverages the RBAs' expertise for knowledge-sharing and global advocacy, with the agencies making a significant contribution to the reference basket of policy instruments for the Alliance. The RBAs jointly developed several policy instrument categories.

36. In the UNFCCC process, the RBAs participate in COP29, focusing on establishing the next climate finance goal and updating Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)/national climate plans. The Technical Cooperation Collaborative, established during COP28, ensures clear linkages between NDCs and adaptation financing. IFAD's capacity to balance policy and project financing, supports both systemic transformation and practical implementation in agricultural and rural development. Collaborative projects such as GEF Food System Integrated Program, co-led by FAO and IFAD, and the Vision for Adaptive Crops and Soils (VACS) initiative, involving CGIAR, underscore the RBAs' commitment to innovative agricultural practices and robust greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting.

37. The RBAs' collaborative efforts were showcased at COP28, where they hosted a joint pavilion and organized events, emphasizing their unified approach to supporting vulnerable communities. In June 2024, together with UAE COP28 and Azerbaijan COP29 Presidencies, the RBAs organized a ministerial event on the topic of climate, fragility and food security, outlining measures to scale up climate action and financing for adapted and resilient agrifood systems in the world's most vulnerable countries.

38. This collaboration extends to other global events, including the United Nations Food System Stocktaking, AGRF, GEF Assembly, the World Food Forum, reinforcing the RBAs' commitment to the transformation of food systems and addressing global food security challenges.

B. Highlights of collaboration activities at regional and country level

a) Country-level collaboration within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) processes

39. The signing of the global RBA MOU reflects a heightened awareness and enhanced collaboration at country level.

40. Having embraced the United Nations development system (UNDS) reform, the RBAs are fully engaged in the UNDS planning and programming processes at country level, through the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and subsequent processes under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). This is underpinned by a good level of collaboration between the RBAs, especially in terms of programming and advocacy. The three agencies have engaged in UNSDCFs through their country offices, contributing to United Nations Joint Work Plans (JWPs) and ensuring that their own country-level strategies and frameworks are fully aligned with the United Nations processes in timing and in substance. More specifically, United Nations Country Teams negotiated 68 UNSDCFs with the involvement of the three RBAs between 2019 and December 2023. Additionally, 34 other UNSDCF initiatives have been formulated with the participation of at least two of the three RBAs.

41. Formal inter-agency partnership mechanisms have been tested in two countries (Annex 1). Drawing from the UNSDCF, an Indonesia RBA Joint Strategic Plan was developed on the same timeline (2021-2025) and efforts made to implement it. Drawing from the experience, it is acknowledged that Agrifood Systems Transformation extends beyond the scope of the RBAs and requires a wider collaborative approach. Consequently, the RBAs have decided that the UNSDCF provides an appropriate planning mechanism engaging the wider United Nations Country Team, and that a specific RBA-based strategy is no longer required.

42. However, there are notable experiences such as the one in Kenya, where the RBAs developed a tripartite Kenya Country-level Collaboration Agreement (KCCA) 2022-2026 that defined their collaboration, drawing on areas in the UNSDCF related to agrifood systems, with associated joint efforts on resource mobilization and enhancing visibility.

43. The RBAs are using the United Nations-INFO system to document their contributions for system-wide reporting on United Nations support and results under countries' JWPs. FAO and WFP are collaborating with the United Nations Development Coordination Office

(United Nations DCO) to explore interoperability between each entity's planning systems, ensuring data consistency, and promoting programme integration and innovation. The RBAs are also actively shaping global policy and guidance in support of field operations and reform implementation as part of the DCO-led Programme Development and Results Working Group in New York.

44. At country level, the RBAs regularly exchange data and identify opportunities for joint policy work. For any non-resident agencies, the RBA network offers the key access point to strategic and sector-wise information about agriculture and food systems, rural development and similar.

b) Country-level collaboration within the United Nations Efficiency Agenda (MoU's thematic area #7)

45. As part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), the RBAs have assumed stronger ownership and accountability for delivering on the efficiency agenda both at corporate and country level. RBA collaborations in the Business Operations Strategy (BOS), Common Back Office (CBO) and Common Premises (CP) are reported at country level, while bilateral collaboration among the RBA as United Nations entities falls within the Global Shared Services (GSS). A consolidated report on all efficiency initiatives is compiled under the leadership of UNDCO, which includes country-level efforts and corporate Headquarters-level efforts by specific entities and through bilateral collaborations.

46. Strengthened ownership and accountability by RBAs and their active engagement in all efficiency initiatives has delivered significant results and synergies at both corporate and country level. Efforts are being made to ensure full alignment with QCPR inputs, and the benefits reported annually to the ECOSOC are evidence of this.

47. Interagency collaboration within the framework of the United Nations Efficiency Agenda applies to all members of the UNSDG, hence RBA collaboration can no longer be treated in isolation and there is no value in separating the RBA segment. The UNSDG Roadmap will expire at the end of 2024, and the Business Innovations Group (BIG) will meet to decide on the governance as well as new targets for 2025/26.

48. Going forward, as the efficiency initiatives evolved, further fine-tuning of the targets will be reflected in the UNSDG Roadmap 2025/26, which will take into account the changing scope, complexity and breadth of efficiency initiatives, as well as observations/recommendations of the United Nations Representatives of Internal Audit Services (UNRIAS), High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), etc.

c) Update on the Joint Sahel Programme (SD3C) (MoU's thematic areas #4 and #6)

49. **Background:** The SD3C Programme, which addresses challenges from conflict, and climate change, is central to the One Sahel Initiative. It aligns with thematic areas 4 and 6 of the updated MoU, focusing on resilience, climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Key activities include developing agricultural lands, distributing agro-silvo-pastoral kits, and training farmers, to enhance food security. Supported by initiatives such as the Africa Integrated Climate Risk Management Programme (AICRM), Inclusive Green Financing for Climate Resilient and Low Emission Smallholder Agriculture (IGREENFIN), and the Great Green Wall, the SD3C Programme reflects strong RBA collaboration (Please refer to the annex 2 which outlines the contributions of each agency to the SD3C programme).

50. Over two years, the US$181.4 million SD3C programme aims to improve the resilience and economic opportunities of 123,000 rural households across Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. It received co-financing from the Netherlands (US$13.2 million), Italy (US$1.9 million), and Ireland (US$0.5 million). In March 2024, a Multi-Donor Funding Facility (MDFF) was established to mobilize resources for phase two, scaling up results and contributions.

51. The programme has faced political instability, conflict, and climate-related disruptions which has complicated its delivery. Nonetheless, the SD3C Programme demonstrates how collaboration and adaptability can support at-risk populations. The SD3C Programme has reached over 50,000 households, achieving 68%[4] of its mid-term target, showcasing its effectiveness in enhancing productivity and regional integration.

52. **Moving forward**, the One Sahel Initiative seeks to deepen its impact by securing additional funding and enhancing decentralized stakeholder engagement and coordination through a territorial development approach. The focus will be on scaling up successful interventions, such as land rehabilitation and enhancing the programme with new additional approaches and tools aimed at further increasing outreach to, e.g., Internally Displaced Persons, whilst continuing to build greater resilience against climate shocks. Integrating smallholders into emergency assistance programmes will ensure the most vulnerable are able to engage in agricultural activities again in the short-term following shocks and distress, and in the long-term benefit from sustainable agricultural practices. Continued collaboration and adaptive strategies are essential for overcoming challenges and achieving the MoU's strategic goal of fostering a more secure and resilient future for the Sahel.

d) Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC)

53. In 2023, the global Food Security Cluster, co-led by FAO and WFP, scaled up the response to emergencies and protracted food crises in 29 countries and coordinated a network of more than 1,000 partners, mostly national or local organizations. Cluster partners supported 134 million people with food, agricultural and livelihood assistance through coordinated response plans in 28 countries. Between January and June 2024, cluster partners supported 48 million people with food and 17 million people with agricultural and livelihood assistance through coordinated response plans that target 112 million people with a financial ask of almost US$14.9 billion across 30 operations.

54. In 2023, the global Food Security Cluster launched a strategic plan to guide cluster's activities over the next three years. Since then, the gFSC has been supporting thematic areas like localization, anticipatory actions, humanitarian, development and peace nexus by providing guidelines to country clusters. The Food Security Cluster has also continued to promote joint cluster initiatives and strengthened intersectoral collaboration with other clusters (Nutrition, Health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, and Protection).

55. In 2023, the Food Security Cluster promoted advocacy at local, regional and global levels, including through panel discussions at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week and the AidEx in Geneva, and co-sponsored ECOSOC side events. Further partnership and advocacy events include the gFSC partners meeting, planned annually, with the next one to be held in November 2024 to celebrate collective achievements, showcase most challenging country issues, and discuss recent developments on scope setting, boundary setting and funding cuts.

[4] As of 31st December, 2023.

e) Working together on gender equality and women's empowerment (MoU's thematic area #3): Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE); and Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition (JP GTA)

56. The RBAs have actively engaged in inter-agency coordination mechanisms on gender equality and women's empowerment, collaborating through platforms such as the Commission on Food Security and Nutrition, the RBA Gender Inter-Agency Coordination Group, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and the Food Systems Summit – Making Food Systems Work for Women and Girls Coalition for Action. The RBAs organized initiatives and events for International Women's Day 2023, CSW 67, International Rural Women's Day, and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and contributed to the development and endorsement of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition.

57. The RBAs continue to replicate successful collaboration models, such as the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE Phase II, in partnership with United Nations Women) and the Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition, and Sustainable Agriculture (JP GTA). These initiatives are crucial for advancing MoU thematic area 3, integrating gender equality into broader food security and nutrition goals, reflecting the RBAs' dedication to addressing the gendered barriers that inhibit women and girls' equitable access to and control over building resilient and sustainable food systems.

58. In Phase II (2022-2027), the programme expanded to include new countries and regions: Nepal, Niger, the Pacific Islands (Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, and the Solomon Islands), Tanzania, and Tunisia, with continued support from Sweden and Norway. Additionally, Rwanda is part of Phase II (funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). By the end of 2023, it reached nearly 20,000 direct beneficiaries and over 138,000 indirect beneficiaries in Nepal, Niger, Pacific Islands, Tanzania, and Tunisia. The JP increased access to land, financial services, and markets for women beneficiaries, including through initiatives such as the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in Tunisia, GALS+ in Rwanda, Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL) in Nepal, and supporting seaweed-related activities in Tanzania. Monitoring visits have indicated that women's confidence and agency is increasing thanks to the JP's approaches, including the engagement of men to address deep-rooted discriminatory social norms.

59. The JP GTA has rolled out progressive tools, developed guidance documents and supported knowledge sharing, reinforcing the importance of GTAs for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture in international platforms and dialogues. It expanded gender-transformative initiatives such as "Cerrando Brecha" in Ecuador and in other countries, Financial Action Learning for Sustainability (FALS), and the GALS in Malawi. Additionally, a network of Gender and Social Inclusion focal points was established across 15 Latin American and Caribbean nations.

f) Update on RBA collaboration around South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)

60. SSTC lies at the heart of the RBA's commitment to support countries as they strengthen national capacity and mobilize partnerships to achieve food security and nutrition. In line with the United Nations system-wide strategy for SSTC, the RBAs have advanced their collaboration on SSTC through joint advocacy, resource mobilization, and in-field initiatives.

Country-level collaboration

Kenya

61. Following the launch of the joint SSTC programme on home-grown school feeding (HGSF) in 2022, the RBAs have been implementing a pilot project in Kenya in collaboration with three government ministries – Agriculture, Health, and Education. In line with the RBA Kenya Country-level Collaboration Framework 2022-2027 and with the government's objectives set in the Global School Meals Coalition, the project promotes a "climate-smart" approach to HGSF and facilitates the sharing of Kenya's experiences with the transition of the WFP-led school feeding programme to the Kenyan government.

Rwanda

62. Building on the recommendations of the RBA SSTC Directors meeting in 2023, the RBAs developed a joint SSTC project to support rural women's empowerment in Rwanda, by tapping into the lessons learned from other countries in the region on climate-smart agriculture innovations and gender-transformative policy implementation. This project complements the United Nations Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE).

RBA-Brazil joint SSTC Programme

63. The RBAs are working on a partnership with the Government of Brazil to implement a joint Programme on supporting school feeding and family farming through SSTC. The programme aims to strengthen national programmes in target countries by leveraging Brazil's expertise and the RBA's comparative advantages. Closely aligned with the Global School Meals Coalition and the Global Alliance against Poverty and Hunger, the programme will be launched under the auspices of Brazil's G20 presidency and initially rolled out in two pilot countries.

III. The Path Forward

64. In the face of converging crises, including climate change and conflicts, it is urgent to reshape agrifood systems, sustainably and equitably. The RBAs existing partnership enables the agencies to complement and build on each other's mandates, comparative advantages and operational modalities, as well as technical expertise, offering the potential to transform agrifood systems and to boost food security and nutrition, and resilience. The RBAs will continue to prioritize collaboration at country level, to achieve greater effectiveness and stronger impact on the ground, focusing their efforts on programme implementation, to enable resilience to future shocks and sustainability of agrifood systems.

65. The RBAs have reaffirmed their commitment to collaboration through the new MoU, which signifies a strategic renewal and guide for collaboration, delineating six thematic areas that underscore the primary focus of the partnership, while also promoting joint initiatives in other areas of mutual interest. Innovative partnerships will remain a priority, involving South-South and Triangular Cooperation, as well as other United Nations Agencies and non-state actors, to address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition, while accelerating the attainment of common objectives.

66. The RBAs are committed to responding effectively to global challenges, working together where it is strategic, beneficial, and the associated costs of collaboration demonstrate a return on shared investment. As reiterated in the '*Follow-up report on Joint evaluation of RBA collaboration*', the RBAs will continue to enhance their collaboration in line with the UNDS repositioning and broader engagement with the United Nations System under United Nations Country Teams and the UNSDCFs. They will also seek to build on and replicate successful cases of collaboration, such as those outlined in this paper. Complementing the broader RBA efforts and in support of the MoU objectives, IFAD and WFP have launched an

Action Plan on Joint Work in Fragile Situations to strengthen their cooperation in fragile contexts over the next four years (2024-2027), laying out principles of cooperation, priority areas and modalities, as well a list of initial focus countries and sub-regions (2024-2025).

67. The current global hunger crisis and the challenging financial constraints facing international organizations make it even more important that the RBAs continue to work strategically, efficiently, and collaboratively in the coming years in order to transform agrifood systems, achieve widespread impact, and support countries in the attainment of the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind.

ANNEX 1

Country case study – Indonesia

1. Indonesia was a pilot country chosen in 2019 to explore ways to deepen the partnership between the RBAs. The RBA Country Representatives in Indonesia liaised and coordinated with each other, with the first step being to develop an integrated set of results on food security and agrifood systems. This deeper collaboration started in the context of the preparation of the CCA for Indonesia, which was finalized in October 2019. The RBAs then worked with other members of the United Nations Country Team to develop the UNSDCF (2021-2025), which was signed with the Government of Indonesia in April 2020.

2. Between them, the RBAs committed to contribute to the achievement of 12 out of the total 30 Outputs that were formulated across the four Strategic Priorities and Outcomes[1]. All three RBAs pledged joint support for seven Outputs, FAO and IFAD pledged to three, and FAO and WFP to two. The RBAs have been contributing to the United Nations Joint Work Plan in Indonesia on an annual basis through their own country programming framework/strategy, and those results will be assessed in 2026 when the UNSDCF will be evaluated.

3. As the next step in the RBA country pilot, the RBAs then collaboratively developed a Joint Country Strategic Plan (2021-2025) to further support sustainable and inclusive food systems while ensuring affordable and healthy diets, that was based on the Strategic Priorities and Outputs of the UNSDCF. A Framework document referring to this Joint Plan was signed by the three RBAs and the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) in June 2021, with the engagement and support of the relevant line Ministries.

4. In 2022 and 2023, the three RBA Country Offices took the initiative to undertake a joint field visit to East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province in the frame of the RBA Joint Strategic Plan and worked together to develop a project concept for a collaborative “Food Systems Analysis”. The project aimed to contribute to government policy and programming, leveraging the expertise and experience of all three RBAs including drawing on a major IFAD investment and a former FAO project in NTT province, and it was endorsed by the Government at national and provincial level. As yet, the RBA Country Offices have not yet been able to mobilize the US$2.5 million required for the project, which reflects the challenges in resource mobilization in Indonesia as a middle-income country.

5. This was the only country in which such an RBA Joint Plan was fully finalized, aiming to reach beyond what could be achieved through the separate efforts of each agency. However, this experience has underscored the necessity for a broad collaborative approach in Agrifood Systems Transformations. Therefore, the RBAs feel that the UNSDCF provides a more appropriate planning framework involving the wider United Nations Country Team, proving to be more efficient and equally as effective as the creation of a specific RBA-oriented strategy.

[1] Indonesia UNSDCF Strategic Priorities: (1) Inclusive Human Development; (2) Economic Transformation; (3) Climate and Disaster Resilience; and (4) Innovation to Accelerate SDGs Achievement.

Country case study - Kenya

6. In Kenya, the Rome-Based Agencies are implementing their collaboration under the Kenya Country-level Collaboration Agreement (KCCA) 2022-2026. This partnership focuses on areas in the UNSDCF related to Food Systems, with associated collaborative efforts on resource mobilization and enhancing visibility. The RBAs rotate leadership roles in various initiatives.

7. The RBAs played a vital role in developing the UNSDCF 2022-2026, particularly in Strategic Outcome 2: Prosperity and Planet. They contributed to designing joint programs like the UNESCO-led Sustainable Integrated Water Management and the UNIDO-led Sustainable Investment, Consumption, and Production in the Green and Blue Economies.

8. The RBAs support Kenya's Food Systems Outcomes by providing technical, advisory, and financial assistance. They are key members of the Food System Steering Committee, co-chaired by the National Convener and the United Nations Resident Coordinator. Key initiatives include the 3FS tool for measuring financial flows to food systems and the Foresight for Food System Transformation (FoSTr) initiative.

9. The RBAs have mobilized funding for joint initiatives, including a US$100,000 SSTC grant for the Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) initiative. They are also seeking additional funds from the United Nations SDG Multi-Trust Fund and a €10 million EU grant for the "BOOST" program, which supports smallholder farmers with subsidized inputs and promotes agro-ecological practices.

10. The RBAs participate actively in policy platforms such as the Agricultural and Rural Development Partners Group and the Arid and Semi-Arid Development Partners Group. They engage in high-level policy discussions and contribute to key government frameworks. The RBAs also explore collaboration opportunities in livestock, fisheries, and rural finance, focusing on enhancing synergies in overlapping regions.

11. The RBAs promote learning and sharing through South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), organizing study tours and facilitating knowledge exchange. They maintain joint visibility through events like World Food Day and provide logistical support for missions, ensuring a unified approach to food security and sustainable development challenges in Kenya.

ANNEX 2

Countries[1]	IFAD financed anchor project managed activities	FAO activities	WFP activities
Mali	Two service providers recruited to provide technical support to 360 beneficiaries and their microprojects.	• 2,174 households (particularly for women heads of households and young people) benefited from cash transfers. • Construction of twelve pastoral boreholes.	**FFA:** Several production and environmental protection assets were constructed or rehabilitated through **Food Assistance for Assets (FFA)** activities, benefiting **10,158 households** with **US$1,220,894** in cash assistance to meet immediate needs, including food. Key assets created include solar-powered boreholes, pastoral wells, market gardens rehabilitated degraded lands, reforestation etc. **SAMS: Support activities for small producers and value chain promotion (SAMS)** included, training on cooperative life (OHADA), post-harvest techniques, agricultural and pastoral production techniques, livestock fattening, and equipment use/maintenance.
Burkina Faso		• 2,925 livelihood restoration kits distributed (1,125 small ruminant capitalisation kits; 450 sheep fattening kit; 1350 food-growing seed kits). • Establishment of 26 agropastoral farmer field schools and 20 Dimitra clubs[3].	**Finalization of Activities under Direct SD3C Funding (Up to December 2023)** • Completed 5 additional boreholes: 2 in Reka and 3 in Kourbo Moogho. • Agroecological market gardens: ○ Reka: 1,705 kg of tomatoes harvested, with sales generating 279,900 Fcfa. ○ Kourbo Moogho: 4.29 tonnes of onions harvested, with sales generating 637,750 Fcfa. • Completion of two *boulis*: 10,760 m^3 in Reka and 12,000 m^3 in Tilli. • Agricultural inputs, provided to 4,829 beneficiaries.

[1] All the results are as of 31st December, 2023.

Countries[1]	IFAD financed anchor project managed activities	FAO activities	WFP activities
			SD3C activities funded by WFP parallel financing (WFP own funds) (US$1.67M), from January to April 2024 **Nutrition** • Established 375 GASPA groups, with 2,502 beneficiaries. • Detected 200 cases of moderate acute malnutrition and 12 cases of severe acute malnutrition. **Resilience and School Canteens** • Created 295 ha of half-moons. • Rehabilitated 5 km of rural roads and treated 5 ravines. • Assessed needs of 25 producer organizations and provided training and formalization support. • Created 80 gardens and a 15 tons grain storage conservatory. • Distributed 259.985 MT of inputs and provided professional training for 100 young people. • Constructed 3 modern kitchens and rehabilitated 4 school gardens.
Niger	• 400 youth trained in vegetable gardening, livestock fattening and food processing (+ 400 other young people currently in training). • International Electrotechnical Commission campaigns on national and regional trade opportunities organized. • Support was provided to the national branches (RBM, ROPPA and APESS) of the RFOs to enable them to take part in Hottingo, a livestock	• 72 young girls trained (36 districts) on the manufacturing of artisanal masks and soap, for the prevention of COVID-19. • Provision of 5,000 households with home garden equipment and agricultural seeds. • Establishment and capacity development of 100 Dimitra clubs • Capacity-building for 55 trainers in conflict resolution.	**FFA** • 2,845 ha of land recovered, including 1,454 ha in 2023/24, plus 181,768 linear meters of half-moons, zais, and stone barriers, and 5 over-dug ponds. • 2,761 households participated in Cash for Assets work, earning 26,000 CFA francs per month for 5 months. • 2,761 households received unconditional cash during the lean season. • 19 ha of market gardening perimeters created, with 10 ha

Countries[1]	IFAD financed anchor project managed activities	FAO activities	WFP activities
	farmers' festival during which information, training and other activities related to nomadic livestock farming are organised.	• Rehabilitation of 25 wells and boreholes in support of home gardens. • 80 producer organizations targeted for capacity building.	supported by WFP in 2024. • 16 village nurseries supported, 964 improved stoves installed, and 530 compost pits created. **SAMS** • 32 committees formed and supervised for investment management. **NUTRITION** • 1,754 children received nutritional supplementation for 9 months each year. • 2,887 children under 5 treated for moderate acute malnutrition in 2023/24. • 404,789 forest seedlings planted, including 202,628 in 2023/24. **SD3C activities funded by WFP parallel financing (WFP own funds), during the first semester of 2024** • School Feeding: 3,154 students benefiting from 12 school canteen schools. • 799 students benefiting from Fellowship Programme.
Senegal	• Identification of 30 farmer organizations for capacity building and provision of startup funds. • Identification of sites for infrastructure construction. • Organisation of 10 information and awareness-raising forums on SD3C activities and strategy (in the 10 communes covered by the programme).	• 219 Dimitra clubs established for a total of 5,484 members, 58% of whom are women and 45% young people.	**FFA** • Constructed 2,447 ml of stone barriers for crop fields protection. • Constructed 13 frame bunds or gabions for **aggressive gullies treatment.** • Constructed 1,500 half-moons in 5 ha for land rehabilitation. **SAMs** • **Rehabilitation of pastoral units (PU):** 2 pastoral shops, 2 water points and 4 vaccination parks constructed. • Capacity building for 129 community leaders

Countries[1]	IFAD financed anchor project managed activities	FAO activities	WFP activities
			(89 men and 40 women) of the PU on the maintenance and management of these infrastructures. • Constructed 2 storage warehouses for storage.
Chad		• Two participatory community planning workshops carried out for the benefit of 10 villages • 1,600 kits (800 small ruminant kits and 800 rainfed crop kits) distributed	**SD3C**: Main outputs during the reporting period (2023-June 2024): **FFA/SAMs** • 1,600 ha of Kangalam powder have been completely drained and are currently 100% productive, employing 22,353 people. Since the beginning of polder exploitation, an estimated 650 mt has already been harvested, not counting the current season. • 3 storage warehouses were constructed. • 14 market hangars were constructed. • 60 m^3 of compost was produced. • 12,630,000 XAF were distributed to 541 participants through cash based transfers. **P2RSA project outputs:** • 5,039 food insecure households assisted with unconditional cash transfers during the lean season. • 4,193 households participating in conditional cash transfer (FFA) programs. • 7 enriched flour factories constructed, and 146,000 kg of flour produced and commercialized. • 28 irrigation systems constructed for both human consumption and agricultural production. • 2 post-harvest stock warehouses constructed and 7 in construction.

Countries[1]	IFAD financed anchor project managed activities	FAO activities	WFP activities
			• 8 learning centers for women and girls constructed and 8 in construction.