



Fifth Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and WFP Executive Board 20 October 2021

High-level Summary

Background

The Fifth Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and the WFP Executive Board (the governing bodies of the Rome-based agencies [RBAs]) took place on 20 October. The entire day was allocated to the meeting to allow ample time for interaction between Board and Council members and the Management of the three organizations. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom and interpretation was provided in all six official languages. As per the practice of rotating the chair among the agencies, IFAD acted as host agency this year.

Mr Gilbert Houngbo, Chairperson of the IFAD Executive Board and IFAD President, was the overall chair of the meeting. Specific segments were chaired by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council and the President of the Executive Board of WFP and introduced by the FAO Director-General and the WFP Deputy Executive Director.

Following a consultative process (involving two preparatory meetings) with Members and the Chairs of the three RBA governing bodies, all stakeholders collectively agreed to focus on two topics of common interest: the United Nations Food Systems Summit and the Joint Evaluation of Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies.

Welcome remarks

The IFAD President opened the meeting with some introductory remarks. The Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, H.E. Mr Hans Hoogeveen, and the President of the Executive Board of WFP, H.E. Mr Luis Fernando Carranza-Cifuentes, then delivered their opening statements. This was followed by statements by the Director-General of FAO, Dr Qu Dongyu and by the Deputy Executive Director, Mr Amir Abdulla, on behalf of the Executive Director of WFP.

Agenda Item 1 – United Nations Food Systems Summit (FSS)

The FAO Director-General provided a brief oral update on the key actions being taken in the follow-up to the FSS. The Coordination Hub will be housed in/hosted by FAO. RBA Management and Member States highlighted the importance of ownership across the three RBAs as well as United Nations system wide and the central coordination role all three agencies must play collectively in the UNFSS follow-up. Members highlighted the importance of leveraging expertise across the RBAs and with other involved United Nations agencies (the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme), as well as the resident coordinators, in order to break down silos and maximize impact in delivering results. The Deputy Director-General

has indicated that the Coordination Hub should be effective as of January 2022. Among other activities, the hub would be consulting with the regional groups and national governments and supporting national actions, including taking forward the national dialogues, which is a key priority for all developing countries.

Member States stated that the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) should play a role in the coordination mechanism ensuring inclusivity and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders. They also highlighted the role of the private sector and involvement of the CFS High-level Panel of Experts. Noting that the Coordination Hub's structure and tasks are still evolving, Member States called for clarity on its mandate, structure, reporting lines, human resources and financial impact and requested further information. They also stressed that no new structures should be put in place.

Member States reiterated the importance of the governing bodies' active involvement in defining the mandate of the Coordination Hub through transparent negotiations and in formal forums. They also referred to the lack of clarity as to the expected outcomes of the present informal meeting and asked for more structured discussions to agree on concrete actions and appropriate monitoring versus the many informal consultations being organized and their limited concrete outcomes. Informal meetings of the RBA governing bodies could play a key role in this.

In terms of key thematic priorities, the following were specifically mentioned:

- Climate-smart agriculture/innovation, ecological coalition, indigenous peoples, women's and youth empowerment
- Sustainable productivity growth, school meals, agricultural innovation
- Agro-ecology, public development banks for agriculture
- Social protection to alleviate poverty and reduce vulnerability and malnutrition
- Climate change, including addressing natural disasters such as drought and floods

It was also suggested that the Coordination Hub and the RBAs have a key role in responding to potential shocks in the future (in light of lessons learned from COVID-19).

In summary, Member States suggested the following:

- More concrete action on the ground, including using the national pathways to translate the FSS into action.
- Joint work by Member States and RBAs within the framework of the 2030 Agenda to drive the common agenda for the delivery of the SDGs.
- Given the different interpretations of the results of the FSS, consensus should be reached on clear outcomes.
- An update to be provided to the RBA governing bodies on the vision, outcomes and actions to be taken in FSS follow-up.
- Organization of an RBA internal session to define functions to support follow-up actions with the full involvement of Member States.

Agenda Item 2- Joint evaluation of RBA collaboration

The Director of Evaluation, WFP, provided a short introduction on behalf of the RBA Evaluation Directors. This was followed by a video recording from Mokoro – the evaluation

firm commissioned to conduct the independent evaluation – providing a short presentation on the evaluation’s scope and key findings. Ms Beth Bechdol, FAO Deputy Director-General (DDG), provided an oral response on behalf of RBA Management.

Member States were pleased that the Management of the three RBAs collectively accepted the evaluation’s five recommendations. Overall, Members welcomed the report. Nonetheless, they reminded the RBAs of the need for a feasibility report, which had been requested in 2019 and should have fed into this evaluation. The FAO DDG noted that FAO would deliver this in collaboration with the other two RBAs. Many Members also mentioned the need to strengthen the understanding of each agency’s unique mandate and to focus on joint programming/action on the ground where feasible and practical, and where the benefits far exceed the transaction costs.

Members also requested the RBAs to focus on synergies within the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and underscored the importance of providing the RBAs with flexible and additional funding to be able to do so.

While Members requested agencies to work together more closely on the ground, they also recognized the need to be consistent and coherent in their requests to the agencies to avoid competition and promote working together where the context allowed for it.

In summary, Member States agreed on the following:

- Greater collaboration is needed on the ground in order to improve results and impact, specifically joint programming also across countries, such as in the Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C).
- It is important not to underestimate that collaboration means additional work and possibly higher transaction costs. There is a clear need to identify the added value of collaborative efforts.
- Clarity on the mandate of each agency is needed for effective collaboration.
- RBA coordination is not an end in itself but rather a means to achieve better results.

The Sixth Informal Joint Meeting of the RBA Governing Bodies will be hosted by WFP in the fourth quarter of 2022.