

172nd Session of the Council

Written Correspondence Procedure – inputs from Members - English version

Item 7 – Update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative

Member Name	Comments
<p>Argentina (Wednesday, 29 March 2023 – 12.39)</p>	<p>Under the written comments procedure established to address specific items on the Agenda of the 172nd Session of the FAO Council, the Representation of the Argentine Republic would like to share the following considerations:</p> <p>Argentina appreciates and acknowledges the information provided by FAO under this Agenda Item, which reports on the development of the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative since its launch.</p> <p>The Hand-in-Hand Initiative was endorsed by the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC) 36 members as a mechanism for promoting effective cooperation between developed and developing countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2 and 10, particularly in countries with a high incidence of poverty and food insecurity and high agricultural potential.</p> <p>We ratify the conclusions reached at the 135th Session of the Programme Committee in March 2023.</p> <p>We are pleased that the number of participating countries has continued to grow and is approaching the target of 64 countries. This increase is a sign of the strong global interest in the HIH Initiative and the need for broader and more ambitious programming by Members.</p> <p>We also appreciate that all FAO Members can participate in it as indirect beneficiaries and as development partners through multiple channels, such as the South–South and Triangular Cooperation. In this context, Argentina reiterates its willingness to offer its experience and knowledge on sustainable agrifood systems to any other countries requiring help under this initiative. As ever, our help is offered on the premise that nobody is so poor they have nothing to give, and nobody is so rich they have nothing to receive. This quote by Pope John Paul is in line with the spirit of HIH and the intention to promote and enhance partnerships between all parties involved.</p> <p>We are pleased to learn that seven countries are planning to organize their own HIH investment forum at national level, and that a sub-regional forum is planned in Central and South America. This shows that countries are committed to the Initiative and are actively working on its implementation.</p> <p>We were also pleased to learn that the investment briefs presented at the 2022 HIH Investment Forum provided a solid basis for the investment support provided by FAO at the second Dakar Summit, organized by the African Union and the African Development Bank. We believe it is important for FAO to continue to support initiatives such as these to achieve food security and resilience in Africa.</p> <p>Argentina is pleased that the HIH Initiative uses innovative tools and adopts a science-based and territorial approach. In other words, the approach acknowledges the existence of multiple possible models, methods and practices for achieving sustainable agrifood systems, depending on national contexts, priorities and capacities. The HIH Initiative ultimately</p>

	<p>contributes to the differentiation of territories and strategies as a fundamental requirement for finding genuine solutions to achieve sustainability in agri-industry and bioindustry.</p> <p>Similarly, incorporating innovation and new technologies as central pillars of the HIH Initiative, once again consistently demonstrates that the public and private science and technology system offers efficient (locally adapted) solutions to the challenges posed by sustainability, and scenarios of productive vulnerability to tackle the scourge of climate change and other shocks threatening producers and stakeholders in agricultural and bioindustrial systems. Lastly, we welcome the fact that the Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum is organized in parallel with the FAO Science and Innovation Forum. We believe that such events are essential to foster international cooperation and to share experiences and best practices regarding investment in agriculture and food security.</p> <p>Argentina, therefore, expresses its interest in continuing to organize this type of fora and to promote the active participation of FAO Members in order to strengthen the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and to achieve the objectives set for sustainable agricultural and food development.</p> <p>To conclude, as Members committed to food security and sustainable development, Argentina supports the efforts of the HIH Initiative and encourages countries to continue working together to achieve the goals of the Initiative and to ensure access to enough nutritious food for all.</p>
<p>Russian Federation (Thursday, 30 March 2023 – 9.31)</p>	<p>The Russian Federation thanks the Secretariat for the information on the progress made on the implementation of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative. At the same time, we note that there is no updated information for Tajikistan. Does it signify that there is no substantial development of the activities since the last update? We would appreciate your comments in this regard.</p>
<p>Australia (Thursday, 30 March 2023 – 18.06)</p>	<p>Australia appreciates this update on the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative.</p> <p>We note the continued growth in the number of countries participating in the HIH and encourage FAO to continue to identify and maximise potential partnerships and investment opportunities, particularly in the Southwest Pacific region. We take note of the new Regional Technical Co-operation Programme project being developed by the FAO-RAP to cover six countries in the region, with a focus on enabling inclusive and effective blended investment in the context of HIH. The document CL172/INF/6 suggests that the project is expected to commence in the coming months. We would appreciate the provision of additional details on this project as it pertains to our region, including for example on resourcing, duration, participation and arrangements for monitoring, reporting and evaluation.</p> <p>We further note the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation HIH dashboard and the progress shown, but suggest that further efforts are made to provide more easily understood information. For example, six stages of HIH are represented in the dashboard, from Stage 1 – Focus on Poverty and Hunger, through to Stage 6 – Programme Governance. It is unclear what these stages represent, as well as the values attributed to them (for example, 15 000 for stage 1 10 000 for stage 6).</p> <p>As part of this communication of information through the dashboard, we also request a break-down of confirmed commitments per country of operation, and further information on the confirmed partners per project/value chain. Further, while we note the dashboard is titled the “Monitoring and Evaluation” dashboard, the evaluation aspects are</p>

	<p>not immediately accessible (both at a project/investment level and at the Initiative level). Accordingly, as information becomes available, we request clear and easily accessible information on evaluation processes and outcomes to be included in the dashboard to allow users to understand and assess the impact of the initiative.</p> <p>Finally, we take note of the summary of the communication strategy that has been published on the website, and we emphasise the value in regular engagement and coordination with existing development and resource partners, to help maximise synergies and prevent duplication and/or misalignment of objectives across programmes and investments.</p>
<p>United States of America (Friday, 31 March 2023 – 16.53)</p>	<p>United States thanks FAO for the update on the Hand in Hand Initiative (HiHI). We appreciate FAO’s responsiveness to Member State comments on this initiative including increased transparency through regular updates and the HiHI dashboard. The United States supports evidence-based data-driven decision making and supports FAO efforts to bring data to the forefront of FAO and policymakers’ decisions.</p> <p>We support FAO efforts to expand the donor base for the HiHI. We request FAO to clarify whether international financial institutional investment in the Hand in Hand initiative represents new investments in agri-food systems or a re-allocation of existing investment. We are interested in hearing more from donors and beneficiaries about their views of the HiHI and what value they find from it.</p> <p>Concerning the HiHI dashboard, we appreciate the brevity of the tabulated information about country-level investments; however, we note some projects have very high costs per beneficiary. We encourage FAO to strive to keep costs per beneficiary in line with international norms.</p>
<p>European Union (Wednesday, 5 April 2023 – 18.39)</p>	<p>I am honoured to write to you on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 27 Member States regarding the above-mentioned agenda item for the 172nd Session of the FAO Council.</p> <p>The EU and its Member States take note of the latest progress report on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative. We would recall the continued importance of ensuring alignment of the Initiative with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the joint programming of the UN development system and the 2030 Agenda, and would like to see this elaborated in the information provided. To that end, we encourage FAO, in accordance with its mandate, to continue the close coordination of its work on the Initiative with other relevant agencies and developing partners.</p> <p>We note the information on the achievements in the various countries. Mobilizing additional funding and attracting investments for taking the Initiative forward in participating countries should be duly aligned with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems and other relevant CFS policy recommendations and guidelines. In addition, continued attention is needed in order to provide full transparency on the financing and to ensure that the Initiative will have no further impact on the regular agreed budget. In this regard, we see a need for clarifications regarding the proposal in the Programme of Work and Budget 2024-25 to allocate resources to the FAO Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum.</p> <p>To conclude, we thank FAO for the information provided on the Initiative as an additional means of contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within FAO’s mandate and ask that FAO continue to provide regular updates on the progress made in implementing the Initiative and the results achieved.</p>

<p>Japan (Wednesday, 12 April 2023 – 4.39)</p>	<p>Japan recognizes the Hand-in-Hand Initiative (HIHI) as one of the most important FAO’s initiatives to promote the transition to sustainable and resilient food systems in developing countries. We acknowledge the efforts of the FAO Secretariat in the enhancement of related information, such as launching a geospatial platform, and continuous improvement of its accessibility, availability and transparency utilizing FAO website.</p> <p>It is important to promote innovation and facilitate the transfer of agricultural and food-related technologies in the transition to sustainable and resilient food systems. In that process, benefits to recipient countries and its people should be prioritized.</p> <p>Japan expects FAO to continue its efforts to improve the Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard by bringing all the necessary information of HIHI together. Japan also expects FAO to work together with Members to verify the effectiveness of the HIHI and lead the discussion on future utilization.</p>
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