

**Integration Dialogue 3: Human well-being and capabilities:
Building back more resilient, healthy, equitable and sustainable societies
(FAO-led)**

10 June, 9:00 – 10:30 hrs. (New York time)

Talking Points for Beth Bechdol as a moderator and a lead agency speaker.

- Your Excellency Vice-President of ECOSOC and Chair of the Integration Segment, Ambassador, Juan Sandoval,
Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- It is a great honour and pleasure for me to represent Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – and guide you in this Integration Dialogue 3 on “Human well-being and capabilities: Building back more resilient, healthy, equitable and sustainable societies.”
- Government lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic caused shocks to many sectors, including **agri-food systems**, putting livelihoods at risk, reducing the incomes of many households and their access to food, especially in rural areas. Worldwide, over four billion people jobs and livelihood relate to food systems, and over 1.5 billion are considered at risk because of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹
- **Small and medium agri-food enterprises** suffered reduced sales and the COVID-19 pandemic has created significant labour market challenges in terms of increased underemployment and unemployment. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector experienced negative growth rates of working hours and employment with a disproportionately high impact on the most vulnerable workers, including youth, women, informal workers, migrants, and seasonal workers.
- The pandemic and related containment measures have aggravated the impact of already pre-existing drivers of fragility and food insecurity. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, estimates suggested that nearly 690 million people worldwide are hungry, or nearly 9% of the global population. The pandemic might have pushed an additional 132 million people into chronic hunger in 2020.

We were already off track to reach SDG 2 before the pandemic and COVID-19 has pushed us further back. So, what to do? Here are three ideas.

FIRST, we need to “build to transform” during our COVID-19 response and recovery efforts so that agri-food systems become MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind to achieve the SDGs by 2030. This will require concerted efforts on many fronts, which may include, but not limited to:

- 1) Policy actions that step up public and private sector investments with significant policy coherence, including more **nutrition-sensitive investment** in food and agricultural production.

¹ Secretary-General Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition (June 2020, page 11)
https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_food_security.pdf

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2) Policy measures to keep international food trade open and to improve efficiency of **internal trade and marketing** mechanisms to reduce the cost of nutritious foods and determining the affordability of healthy diets for both urban and rural consumers.

SECOND, this pandemic stresses the need for a **green recovery**, particularly relevant for the agri-food systems.

- We need to invest in green recovery of food systems to address both food security and climate risks.
- FAO has integrated green recovery into its COVID-19 response and recovery program. Here are just a couple of examples of how we are working with other UN entities to offer integrated solutions for agri-food systems:
 - FAO is collaborating with UNDP, UNEP and other partners to mainstream green and regenerative solutions into national response and recovery efforts, making sure green recovery considerations are central to countries climate actions for agriculture.
 - FAO jointly with UNEP, UNDP is collaborating with multilateral financial institutions such as the GEF (Global Environment Facility) and GCF (Green Climate Fund), to support governments access climate and environment finance and support them in building the resilience of agricultural livelihoods through increased investments in ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions.

THIRD, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of promoting stronger social policies for addressing the needs and rights of the poor and most marginalized to ensure that our efforts leave no one behind.

We need to:

- Promote a people-centric approach, to protect the most vulnerable communities affected by the pandemic and build the resilience of family farmers and small-scale producers;
- Link social protection to agricultural and rural-based livelihoods
- Promote policies that enhance **employment and income-generating activities**, including decent rural jobs for youth, and **nutrition-sensitive social protection programs**,
- Position **human rights** at the center of the food systems transformation ;
- And last but not least – Pay priority attention to the **informal sector**, where limited social protection programs, including insurance and employment guarantees, existed to buffer the impact of income shocks.

I would also like to share ways in which FAO, and many partners, are taking these and other solutions forward?

- **First**, we promote **Innovations and digital technologies in both emergency and non-emergency responses**. Tools such as digitalization at scale of cash transfers and e-incentives provide small-scale farmers access to a range of inputs - financial services to index insurance to extension services – that can keep them afloat in the short-term and provide long-term assistance to sustainably increase production, productivity and market access.
- **Second**, we provide continuous support to countries to ensure continuity of the **critical food supply chain** for the most vulnerable populations. 24 million acutely food insecure people threatened by COVID-19 impacts have received emergency livelihood support and

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scaled-up cash transfers in the 34 focus countries under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan.

- **Third**, we significantly scaled-up **data and analytics**, to improve our response to COVID-19 and beyond, and fully integrated with policy and technical support. The most explicit example is a country-led and country-owned **Hand-in-Hand initiative**, which uses data and modelling to provide a comprehensive view of economic opportunities with a particular eye toward identifying employment and income-generating activities.

I thank you.