As prepared for delivery

IFAD Innovation Day

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International Fund for Agricultural Development

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Excellencies,

Distinguished guests and dear friends,

1. As our world scrambles to deal with a changing climate, a haunting pandemic and protracted conflicts worldwide, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is constantly looking for innovative ways to help rural people and communities become more resilient and protect their livelihoods.

2. IFAD has long been regarded as a key player in the area of agricultural innovation. Over the years, the fund has invested in the generation, dissemination and application of innovative solutions for rural development.

3. For IFAD's Strategy and Knowledge Department, innovations are vital so we can deliver results in a smarter, faster and more cost-effective way.

4. We have taken stock of the many innovations that already exist and are being implemented in our programmes, and

identified six categories of innovations: institutional; products; processes; financial; digital; and methodological. Innovation is everywhere.

5. From coastal communities in the Philippines - with artificial reefs, to the savanna in Rwanda - with the use of biogas, IFAD is innovating.

6. From nature-based farming approaches to high-tech digital solutions such as Geographic Information System (GIS) or artificial intelligence, IFAD is innovating.

7. Yet, innovation is much more than just a good idea. That's just the start.

8. Of the plethora of bright ideas out there, few have reached millions of people, and fewer still tens or hundreds of millions of people. And indeed many innovations fail to deliver on quality and equality.

9. Failure is, of course a welcome and necessary part of innovation, but we also need ensure that those innovations that do have potential to bring about positive impact for rural peoples' lives do not face prohibitive barriers to scaling.

10. In this panel session we're going to look at scaling innovation, which means taking that bright idea and enabling improvement of predefined outcome. Here, I am most interested in scaling impact – and that means achieving improved impact at the optimal scale. This is achieved by scaling up and increasing more throughput, by scaling out and expanding sites or opportunities, or by scaling deep - by improving the quality. And so when we talk about scaling at IFAD, we can mean any one of these.

11. To me there are three key areas which determine success or failure of scaling:

   a. Firstly, is User Centricity. To achieve impact at scale, the user must be front and centre to identifying demand and that's also important when scaling out, up or deep. As we will see in the pitches shortly, IFAD holds this tenet key.

   b. Secondly, to achieve impact at scale, innovations must be able to achieve Financial Sustainability. That's why, during our innovation challenge here at IFAD, projects are put through their paces using lean innovation tools, not only to test their ideas, but also to ensure they have rigorous plan to validate for viability, feasibility and desirability.

c. And thirdly, Operational Maturity - or whether teams have the right skills to go the distance - often plays a huge role in determining success or failure of innovations. IFAD's innovation challenge hardwires in team diversity, equity and inclusiveness from the get-go making sure the teams have a wide variety of skills and ideas represented. We also encourage partnerships including with Private Sector, giving our teams the best chance.

12.   Before I hand over the panel dialogue, let me first finish by considering the ultimate goal here- achieving impact at scale for rural people, be that through livelihood improvements, nutritional improvements, improved climate resilience, or something else. A barrier one often sees to scaling innovations for impact is one that I am particularly interested in, and that is a focus on efficacy rather than effectiveness.

a. To understand the efficacy of an innovation, we need data on whether an innovation has helped to solve a specific problem in a specific context, by how much and what the minimum conditions are for it to work.

b. However, for scaling impact, we need evidence to help us understand the effectiveness of innovations at achieving a certain outcome under different scenarios.

c. This requires not only a scaling of the innovation but also a scaling of the evaluation approach, by collecting different data at the systems level.

d. So what excites me about the future of Innovation at IFAD is the opportunity for us to bring together our strong expertise on assessing impact and evaluation, with proven success on fostering the origination of ideas and testing, to create a truly evidence-based approach to scaling.

e. And with that, let's start with the panel dialogue to learn more about the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for scaling innovation.

13.   Thank you!