

IFAD and Farmers' Organizations Partnership in Progress: 2020-2023



**Report to the eighth global meeting of the Farmers' Forum,
in conjunction with the forty-seventh session of IFAD's
Governing Council**

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Volume I: Overview and Conclusions
Main Report

The **Farmers' Forum Consensus** (presented in the box below) was established in February 2005 at a meeting organized by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), La Via Campesina and the Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA). Participants in the workshop agreed on a brief yet far-reaching statement that formed the basis of the Farmers' Forum (FAFO) initiative. A steering committee, composed of representatives of IFAD and seven networks of farmers and fishers, was then constituted to guide the process.

The **Farmers' Forum** was established as a permanent process of consultation and dialogue between farmers' and rural producers' organizations (FOs), IFAD and governments, focusing on rural development and poverty reduction. Its first global meeting was held in Rome in February 2006 and subsequent meetings were organized every two years, in conjunction with IFAD's Governing Council. Also, national and regional consultations were carried out between each global meeting. During the sixth Global Meeting of the FAFO held in February 2016, it was decided that, in line with IFAD's decentralization process, the FAFO should be further decentralized with: (i) regional consultations organized every four years in the five regions, alternating with a global meeting (the first regional consultations were organized in 2018), taking the opportunity to organize them jointly with the IFAD annual Regional Implementation Workshops (RIW) ; and (ii) global meetings organized every four years (the first four-year cycle global FAFO meeting was held in 2020 and the next will be held in 2024).

At the conclusion of the first global FAFO in 2006, the Steering Committee agreed on a list of recommendations, which were presented to the IFAD Governing Council. Later, in May 2006, the President of IFAD participated in the World Farmers Congress of IFAP in Seoul. In his keynote address to the Congress, he responded to the recommendations of the FAFO and made several commitments on behalf of the Fund. One of these recommendations was to monitor the progress in IFAD's engagement with FOs and to regularly report on it to the FAFO. This **Partnership in Progress** (PiP) report is the instrument through which IFAD reports to the global meeting of the FAFO.

Reporting on IFAD-FO partnership. IFAD's previous PiP reports to the FAFO were prepared in February of 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2020. They presented the evolution of IFAD's partnership with FOs over the bienniums 2006–2007, 2008–2009, 2010–2011, 2012–2013 and 2014–2015, and the four-year period of 2016–2019. Also, since decentralization of the FAFO, IFAD regions have organized two successive sessions of regional FAFOs (in 2017–2018 and in 2022–2023). This report reviews the evolution of this partnership over two bienniums, 2020–2021 and 2022–2023.

The Farmers Forum Consensus¹

The participants in the meeting share IFAD's fundamental objective of overcoming rural poverty through the economic, social and political empowerment of rural poor people themselves and their organizations.

They agree with and support the overall project of creating a Farmers' Forum for consultations and dialogue on ways to "enable the rural poor to overcome poverty" and on IFAD operations.

The Farmers' Forum is:

- an ongoing, bottom-up, process – not a periodic event – spanning IFAD-supported operations on the ground and policy dialogue;
- a tripartite process involving farmers' organizations, governments and IFAD;
- a space for consultation and dialogue focused on rural poverty reduction and the centrality of smallholders and family farming development in this process²;
- an instrument for accountability of development effectiveness, in particular in the area of empowerment of rural poor people and their organizations; and
- an interface between pro-poor rural development interventions and the process of enhancing the capacity of farmers' and rural producers' organizations (including organizations of artisanal fishers, pastoralists and landless rural workers).

The Farmers' Forum:

- is guided by the principles of inclusiveness, pluralism, openness and flexibility;
- is built on existing fora where possible, avoiding duplication in these cases;
- respects existing organizations and creates new spaces where needed; and
- is a joint dialogue platform steered – at global and regional levels – by joint and inclusive steering committees of representative membership-driven producers' organizations and IFAD. Steering committees have a clear mandate, rules of procedures and code of conduct. The Farmers' Forum process also includes autonomous spaces for consultation and preparation among producers' organizations before meeting with IFAD³.

Conditions

- The forum process starts with national-level consultations that feed into regional or subregional meetings. The latter shape the content of, and participation in, the Global Farmers' Forum at IFAD's Governing Council.
- The forum process should feed into IFAD's governing bodies.
- The forum's success depends on IFAD's capacity to enhance country-level consultation with farmers' organizations and contribute to their capacity-building needs.
- Participants recommend, in particular, institutionalizing engagement with farmers' organizations in key IFAD operational processes (projects, and country and regional strategies).

¹ From the Concluding Statement of the 2005 Workshop, and including the updates made following the 2016 FAFO steering committee's decision.

² The second part of this defining point on "the centrality of smallholder and family farming development in this process" was added by decision of the FAFO Steering Committee in February 2016 at the sixth global meeting of the FAFO.

³ This entire paragraph was added by decision of the FAFO Steering Committee in February 2016 at the sixth global meeting of the FAFO.

Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACP	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries
AFA	Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development
AgriCord	Consortium of NGOs (agri-agencies)
AOPP	Association of Professional and Peasant Organizations of Mali
APFP	Asian Pacific Farmers' Programme
APR	IFAD's Asia and the Pacific Division
ARISE	Assuring Resiliency of Family Farmers amidst COVID-19 programme
CAPAD	Confédération des associations des producteurs agricoles pour le développement
CDs	Country Directors
CNCPRT	Conseil National de Concertation des Producteurs Ruraux du Tchad
CNOP-Mali	National Confederation of Farmers' Organizations of Mali
COOCENKI	Coffee Grower Cooperative of North Kivu (DRC)
COPROFAM	Confederación de Organizaciones de Productores Familiares del MERCOSUR
COSOP	Country Strategic Opportunities Programme
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAFF	Eastern Africa Farmers Federation
ESA	IFAD's East and Southern Africa Division
ESNAU	Eswatini National Agricultural Union
FAFO	Farmers' Forum
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FO	Farmers' and Rural Producers' Organization
FO4A	Farmers' Organizations for Asia
FO4ACP	Farmers' Organizations for ACP
FO4LA	Farmers' Organization for Latin America
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme
ICO	IFAD Country Office
ICT4D	Information and Communications Technology for Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFAP	International Federation of Agricultural Producers
IGREENFIN	Inclusive Green Financing initiative
IOE	Independent Office of Evaluation (IFAD)
LAC	IFAD's Latin America and the Caribbean Division
LNWMGA	Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association
MSAS	Mutual Societies of Agricultural Services
NEN	IFAD's Near East, North Africa, Europe and Central Asia division
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PADER-G	Programme D'appui Au Développement Rural Dans Le Guéra
PAFO	Pan African Farmers' Organization
PARSAT	Projet d'Amélioration de la Résilience des Systèmes Agricoles au Tchad
PASA-NK	North Kivu Agriculture Sector Support Project
PAS2P	Project to assist pastoralist families faced with the cumulative effects of the pastoral lean season, insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic
PDTS	Sustainable Territorial Development Project
PIEJR	Economic Integration Project for Young Rural People in the Poultry and Fish Value Chains
PIFON	Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network

PiP	Partnership in Progress (report)
PMI	IFAD's Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division
PMU	Project Management Unit
PRODESUD	Agropastoral Development and Local Initiatives Promotion Programme
PROPAC	Plateforme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale
RBM	Billital Maroobe Network
REPER	Projet Renforcement de la Productivité des Exploitations Agropastorales, Familiales et Résilience
R-FAFOs	Regional Farmers' Forum
ROPPA	Réseau des organisations paysannes et des producteurs agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
RPSF	Rural Poor Stimulus Facility
SACAU	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions
SFOAP	Support to Farmers' Organizations in Africa Programme
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
UMNAGRI	Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs
UNDF	United Nations Decade for Family Farming
UNFFE	Uganda National Farmers' Federation
UNFSS	United Nations Food System Summit
VNFU	Vietnam National Farmers' Union
WAMPP	Wool and Mohair Promotion Project
WFP	World Food Programme
4P	Public Private Producer Partnership



Overview and Conclusions

The Partnership in Progress (PiP) report to the 2024 Global Meeting of the Farmers' Forum (FAFO) aims to assess the evolution of the partnership between FOs and IFAD at national, regional and international levels over the 2020-2023 period.

The 2024 Global FAFO Meeting is special for multiple reasons. Firstly, the global health crisis of COVID-19 and Russia–Ukraine War that occurred in the last four years significantly challenged food systems and negatively affected the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and food producers around the world. In that context, FOs have played a key role to support farmers and their resilience in rural areas. Secondly, the 2024 FAFO is occurring during the process of Consultation on the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD13), which implies not only mobilizing resources to reconstitute the core funding, but also renewed priorities and partnerships as well as, potentially, an evolution in the intervention strategy. Finally, the 2024 Farmers' Forum celebrates the 20th anniversary of its creation, thus a key moment to take stock and reflect on the future.

The PiP Report is assessing the partnership over the two biennium 2020–2021 and 2022–2023, using both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis is based on surveys submitted to IFAD country directors (CDs) and provides key data on trends and modalities of the partnership with FOs in IFAD country strategies' (COSOP), projects' designs, and in IFAD investment projects' implementation (Section I). It also provides an overview of the grants' portfolio supporting FOs and its key outcomes (Section III). Also, the PiP report explores how the second cycle of regional FAFOs organized in the five regions positively influenced the partnership between FOs and IFAD at regional and national levels (Section II). Finally, actions to improve the partnership are presented (Section IV), followed by the way forward.

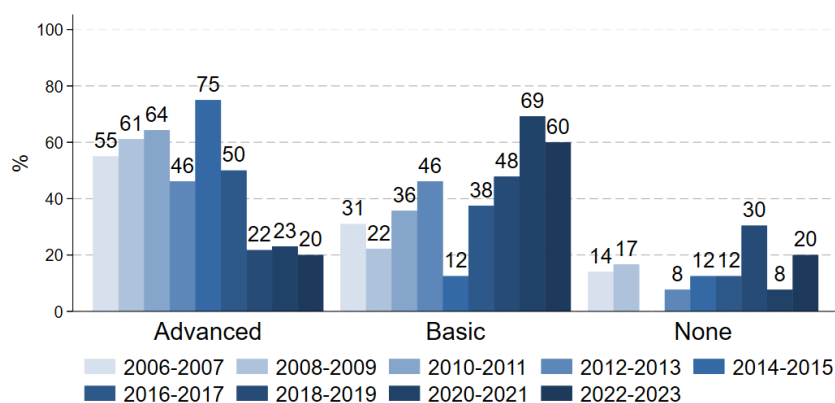
Section I - Quantitative analysis of country-level partnerships supported by new IFAD strategies and its new and ongoing investment projects. Main trends.

FOs in 2020-2023 COSOP Design. FOs' participation in COSOP design is remaining a norm, and global participation improved slightly since the last FAFO. FOs' involvement reaches 92% and 80% for biennium 2020-21 and 2022-23 respectively. The level of FOs' involvement in COSOP design has decreased⁴, although the overall participation of FOs remains high. The trends differ across regions: "Advanced level of participation"⁵ of FOs in APR, ESA and LAC regions has significantly decreased with respect to previous periods; however, it increased significantly for NEN and slightly for WCA. Overall, IFAD country teams report that COSOP design improves with FOs' participation (76 per cent in average during 2008-2023) and the two main improvements resulting from FOs' participation are "identification of target groups" (80%) and "policy dialogue with governments" (70%). Policy dialogue is also the main foreseen role of FOs in the future implementation of COSOPs.

⁴ the percentage of countries that reported an "Advanced level of participation" of FOs in the design process has significantly decreased over time, while cases of "Basic level of participation" of FOs has increased

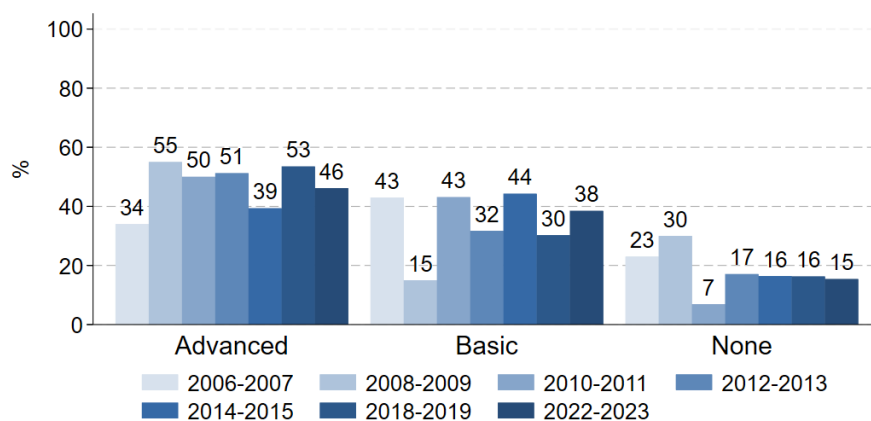
⁵ This category includes all advanced types of modalities in which FOs were recognized as strategic stakeholders closely involved in the COSOP and project design process, including participation in design-related workshops or organizing their own internal FO-led workshops to better shape their contribution.

Figure A: Evolution of FOs participation in COSOP design over the past 18 years (2006-2023)



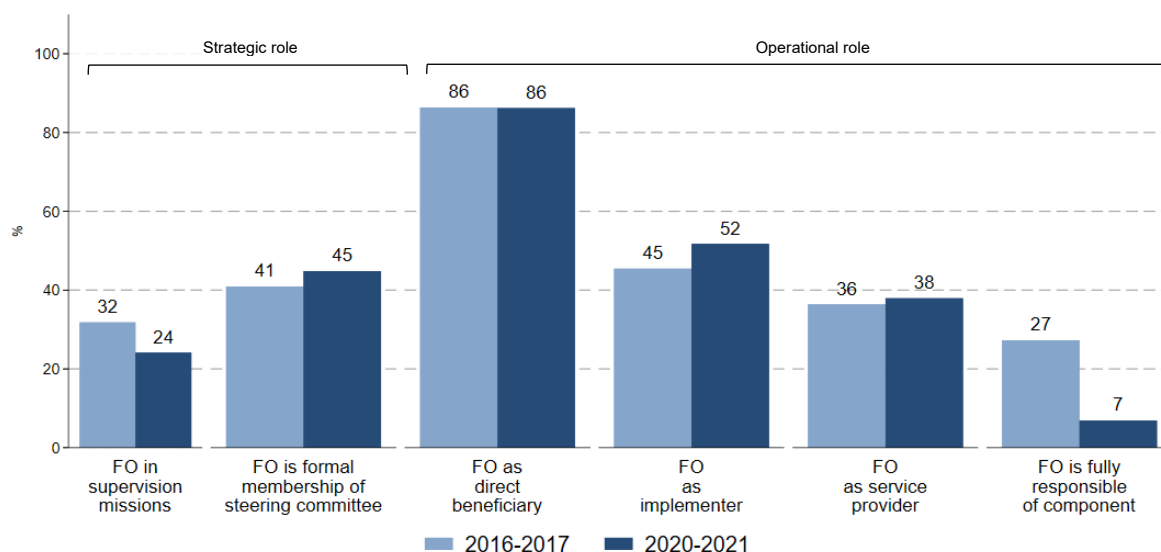
FOs in 2022-2023 Project design. FOs have been involved in 85% of the 13 projects’ designs reviewed in the survey, confirming the stability of this kind of collaboration over time. The main types of FOs involved are national FO platforms (45%) and apex commodity FOs (27%). The top three modalities of involvement of FOs in projects design through: (i) Bilateral meetings held in the field or the capital (91%), (ii) participation in multi-stakeholder discussions (73%); (iii) specific workshops (55%). Moreover, 82 per cent of respondents reported that FOs’ participation influenced the design. The overall trends of modalities of involvement of FOs across regions are exactly the same as for the COSOP designs: APR, ESA and LAC show an important drop of the “Advanced level of participation” with respect to previous years, while NEN and WCA are increasing slightly. For these new designs, as per the Project design reports, FOs are planned to be involved in project implementation in 91 per cent of them.

Figure B: Evolution of FOs level participation in the project design over the last 18 years (2006-2023)



FOs’ participation in implementation of projects approved in 2020-2021. There was a significant increase in the participation of FOs in project implementation: from 71 per cent in 2016-2017 to an average of 91 per cent in 2020-2021. FOs’ role as implementing partners has increased in the same period, from 45 per cent to 52 per cent of responses, while the cases where FOs are fully responsible for the implementation of a component dropped from 27 per cent to 7 per cent. Most regions prioritize the operational role of FOs in implementation, and the role of FOs as implementers remains important in APR, ESA, LAC and WCA, with more than 40 per cent of responses.

Figure C: Participation of FOs in project implementation: Modalities



Section II - Regional Process of the FAFOs 2020-2023

In alignment with IFAD's decentralization process, the decentralization of the FAFOs in the regions started after the 2016 Global FAFO to enhance the level of collaboration at country level between FOs, governments and IFAD, as well as to closely monitor and nurture the partnership. During the 2020–2023 period, the second cycle of regional FAFOs was held, and for the first time it covered the NEN region. Regional FAFOs (R-FAFOs) are undertaken based on IFAD's geographical setup and the diverse nature of FOs and regions. For instance, in NEN and LAC, two separated sub-regional meetings of the FAFO were organized based on the different realities present within the regions. During this period, seven regional meetings were held between September 2022 and February 2023 gathering more than 600 people, including FO leaders, IFAD staff and strategic partners. In each region, regional steering committees were either formed⁶ or held sessions to plan for the events, in order to decide on the thematic content and logistical aspects. Moreover, for the first time, a dedicated set of surveys was designed and submitted to IFAD country teams, PMUs and FOs prior the ESA, LAC and WCA events⁷ in order to assess the partnership from various perspectives.

Participants of all regional meetings of the FAFO recognized the necessity of developing IFAD interventions together with the FOs. Moreover, collaboration between IFAD and FOs at different levels is considered fundamental for the success of IFAD interventions, although improvements in collaboration are needed. R-FAFOs were also an opportunity for IFAD regional teams to discuss with regional FOs on joint strategic areas for cooperation.

Cross-cutting recommendations identified and agreed during the R-FAFO meetings are the following:

- Strengthen national farmers' forum processes, as well as support the farmer-led design and implementation of national and regional action plans for the UN Decade of Family Farming (UNDF).
- Institutionalize the regional FAFO/regional implementation workshop joint planning to foster concrete discussions between FOs and IFAD country teams and Project management units (PMUs), and to produce concrete action plans to continuously improve collaboration at country and regional levels (also important for the regional policy dialogue).
- Systematize meaningful involvement of FOs in all IFAD processes, and develop direct contracting with apex FOs as strategic implementing partners.

⁶ for the NEN FAFOs that were organized for the first time

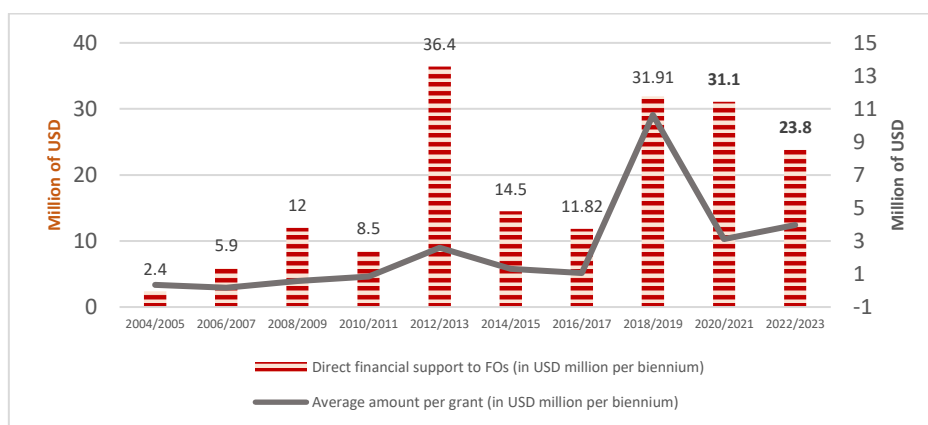
⁷ Only APR and NEN FAFOs did not benefit from a survey prior the events because of lack of time for APR (a survey to PMUs was taken in 2023 after the regional FAFO to feed into this PiP report) and because the regional FAFO was new in NEN.

- Set up a permanent grant facility for direct financing to FOs, particularly on climate change adaptation and mitigation by FOs.
- Consider key subtopics important to family farmers and their organizations – e.g. artisanal fisheries, herders/pastoralists, agroecology.
- Improve the documentation of innovative partnership features and invest in knowledge management, exchange visits, cross-fertilization, and training of IFAD and PMU staff on how to engage with FOs.

Section III – IFAD’s grants to FOs over the years 2020-2023

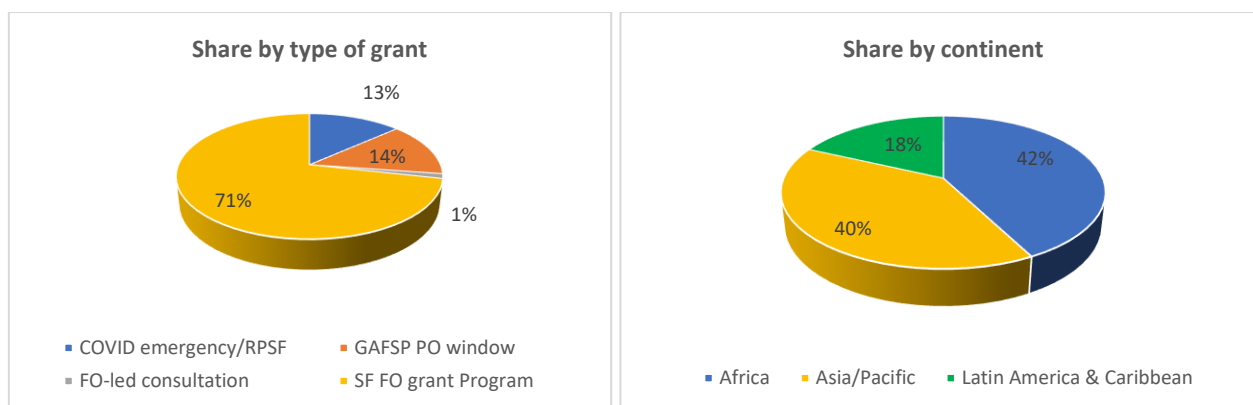
During the two bienniums under review, 16 grants to FOs were approved for a **total amount of US\$54.91 million** and this amount is the highest since the beginning of FAFO in 2004. Most grants were directly allocated to the FOs (**70% of the total envelope**), except for eight grants implemented by AgriCord⁸ (US\$12.2 million) and FAO (US\$4.2 million) but nonetheless in direct support of national and local FOs.

Figure D: Evolution of the grants to FOs (2004-2023)



The main financing windows and geographic focus for grants to FOs are highlighted below:

Figure E: Approved grants to FOs (2020-2023)



Africa and Asia Pacific are the major recipients of grants⁹. In 2020–2023, FOs in Africa received US\$23.2 million (42% of the total) and FOs in Asia Pacific US\$21.7 million (40% of the total).

⁸ AgriCord is a global alliance of agri-agencies mandated by FOs and their cooperative businesses from countries in Africa, Asia, Canada, the European Union and Latin America.

⁹ It should be noted that the most relevant regional programme in terms of budget allocation, FO4ACP, was approved in 2019 and therefore included in the previous reporting period covered by the 2016 - 2019 PiP. FO4ACP is currently in the implementation phase. In the current reporting period 2020-2023, only the additional funding received in 2021 is included as “new approved grant”.

The European Union-IFAD co-funded FO4 programmes remain the most important modality for direct engagement with FOs. In the reporting period, US\$39.2 million were disbursed to FOs across all continents, corresponding to 71 per cent of the total amount granted. Now all coming under a common brand of “FO4 Programmes” across the globe, the **FO4 programmes** have the same key pillars on economic empowerment, institutional development and policy dialogue, they are in alignment with FO partners’ strategic priorities and putting them in the driving seat of implementation to ensure projects’ relevance, impact and sustainability.

Over the 2020–2023 period, IFAD supported the access of 10 FOs to the **GAFSP PO window** funding through three call for proposals; this led to the financing approval of US\$17.91 million by GAFSP (of which US\$7.65 million are accounted for in this report)¹⁰. During COVID, through its **RPSF**¹¹, IFAD funded FOs’ regional emergency projects for US\$7.35 million (in APR, ESA, NEN and WCA regions). These projects demonstrated the capacity of FOs to innovate and play an instrumental role in the support and assistance to vulnerable producers in crisis and fragile contexts. Finally, in preparation for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), IFAD disbursed USD 250,000 to ten Farmers Forum organizations to convene dialogues with their members in order to crowdsource and identify solutions to make food systems stronger and more equitable. These dialogues aimed to bring to the UNFSS table voices from across all sectors of society, catalyse new opportunities for collaboration and possibly set out intentions and commitments for food systems transformation.

Section IV – Areas of partnership improvement

This report provides an overview of the partnership not only in the 2020-2023 period but with a more global vision since FAFO was created. Even though the participation of FOs in COSOP and project designs seems to remain globally high, stable and is valued by IFAD country teams, the important regional differences, with the level of involvement decreasing in several regions, are calling for our attention to ensure that the involvement of FOs in IFAD operations will be more systematic. One key orientation would be to institutionalize the FAFO process and FOs systematic involvement in order to avoid any disruptions linked to the rotation of IFAD staff. The analysis shows also an evolution in the roles played by FOs in IFAD operations, with a larger participation of certain types of FOs as service providers, implementing partners or even assuming the implementation responsibility of a project component. These operational roles of FOs are crucial not only to promote sustainability but also for FOs’ empowerment. Clearly, the role of FOs in strategic and policy engagement is fundamental.

The recent R-FAFO meetings enabled IFAD to assess some of the challenges faced by ICOs, PMUs and FOs in their collaboration, namely: i) lack of institutional and organizational capacities of FOs; ii) lack of funding for FOs participation; iii) lack of information on IFAD projects among FOs; and iv) delays in implementation. ICOs and PMUs also discussed a key issue related to the tendency of creating groups for the purpose of receiving the support from projects, which is not a sustainable way to engage with FOs.

A strategy for improvement therefore relies on four major pillars

1. A robust action framework that involves IFAD, FOs and governments: it is necessary to articulate a more structured strategy and related operational mechanisms to more effectively work together (co-working) and to more systematically co-construct programmes, funding mechanisms and strategies for vulnerable rural people. This framework will also help to identify key actors and their roles, based on different types of FOs with different levels of structuring and organization, and different motivations and histories, which IFAD should take advantage of.
2. Effective incentive mechanisms: Over the last 20 years, almost US\$180 million has been provided to FOs through grants. The funding needs of FOs should be addressed according to their roles and needs. The 20 years of collaboration with FOs in the policy dialogue area, human capital in apex FOs, and the growing needs of financing for family farmers in the

¹⁰ for the moment US\$7.65 million approved by IFAD and accounted for in this report as the last 5 projects of the 2023 call are under final design with IFAD support

¹¹ Rural Poor Stimulus Facility, an IFAD source of funding initiated under the emergency context of COVID-19

climate resilience/biodiversity conservation areas are demonstrating that FOs also often play a very important public utility role that cannot be considered “profitable” in the economic sense, therefore justifying the allocation of sufficient grant resources to them. During the pandemic, the implementation of the RPSF demonstrated that FOs at all levels can effectively manage these resources and obtain important results, even on very crucial topics such as social cohesion, and in very fragile environments and during challenging moments. IFAD, FOs and governments should leverage these lessons learned and design further funding programmes/ financing mechanisms strategically, considering the many roles that FOs can play.

3. Dialogue and decision-making processes: This year, we celebrate 20 years of the FAFO. Eight years ago, the regional FAFO successfully started in four regions, and now all five IFAD regions have organized regional FAFO sessions. Nevertheless, it is necessary to depart from the idea that the FAFO refers only to meetings that take place every four years and embrace the idea that the FAFO is an ongoing process. This implies continuous dialogue between IFAD (headquarters and, most importantly, IFAD country offices) and FOs.
4. A systematic IFAD corporate assessment of partnership with FOs: even though a significant number of studies and stories from the field on IFAD-FO partnership exist, it has been challenging to assess systematically what is the result of the important work achieved. It has been shown that the role of FOs during project design and implementation (as implementers) is recognized as crucial. Moreover, FOs’ participation during COSOP design is also recognized as necessary. Therefore, the involvement of FOs in the different stages of programme/project design and implementation should be measured and monitored along with the other corporate indicators. One area could be to incorporate indicators of the IFAD–FO partnership into the core indicators of IFAD.

The Way Forward

This 2024 Session of the Global Farmers’ Forum is being held after four years of intense uncertainty characterised by multiple crisis (including the COVID19 pandemic) and challenges, and in an important moment for FOs and IFAD as it celebrates 20 years of existence of the FAFO as a bottom-up process of dialogue between IFAD and the main global, continental and regional representatives of small-scale farmers and food producers’ organizations.

It is also a strategic moment after the second cycle of regional FAFOs has taken place, with geographical balance, stocktaking the benefits of IFAD’s decentralization for the FAFO. The key messages emerging from the regional FAFOs are: (i) promoting country-level farmers’ forums to concretely foster the national dialogues between governments, IFAD and FOs is a great opportunity now that the all IFAD operational teams are based in the countries; (ii) it is critical to mobilize adequate tools and financing to strengthen FOs at various levels of institutional capacity and/or maturity to better fulfil their mandates based to their context (e.g. economic, social and environmental, intermediate with local markets, processing enterprises, rural finance stakeholders, public utility role through policy engagement, farmer-led rural people’s feedback mechanisms); and (iii) it is necessary to exchange knowledge across countries and across regions on effective ways to engage with FOs for more efficient, empowering, sustainable and scalable rural development impact.

The timing is tactically crucial, as this eighth global meeting of the Farmers’ Forum is being organized in conjunction with the end of the process of replenishment of IFAD (IFAD13), where new instrumental orientations are confirmed and where the IFAD–FOs partnership can find many opportunities. For example: (i) leveraging on the many examples where FOs could have impactful interventions in fragile contexts; (ii) building on the vast experience of small-scale farmers and food producers’ organizations in preserving biodiversity and developing climate adaption practices; and (iii) reinforcing private sector engagement by empowering FOs to become stronger partners in win-win alliances with other private actors.

The 2024 Global Farmers’ Forum will be the opportunity for a strategic discussion about the findings of this report with the aim of building on what it works well, address the areas for improvements identified as well as agree on the future direction of the IFAD-FOs partnership.

Introduction

The Partnership in Progress report to the 2024 Global Farmers' Forum (FAFO) aims to assess the evolution of the partnership between farmers' organizations and IFAD at national, regional and international levels over the two biennium 2020–2021 and 2022–2023.

This Eighth Global Meeting of the Farmers' Forum is taking place after four years of unique uncertainty due to the global health crisis of COVID-19 and its socioeconomic consequences on the livelihoods of small-scale farmers, food producers, artisanal fishers, and pastoralists all over the globe. This crisis was followed by the Russia–Ukraine War and its impact on food and energy price volatility, which is still affecting family farmers. In this context of multiple crises, including climate change and its negative impacts on food production, and limited financing resources of partners, there is an urgent need for governments and family farmers and their organizations to invest in climate adaptation measures. Stakeholders recognize that policies should promote sustainable food systems and food sovereignty, pushing for enhanced climate-resilient farming practices, such as agroecology.

The 2024 Global FAFO is also occurring during the process of **Consultation on the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD13)**, critical to strengthen the capacity of IFAD to better support its members and partners, and thus to step up its contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Immediately after the closure of the global FAFO, Member States will come together to agree on IFAD strategic directions on priority topics: interventions in fragile contexts; improving resilience to climate change and multiple crises through tailored biodiversity-oriented financing and interventions; and intensifying private sector engagement to deliver sustainable impact at large scale.

IFAD recognizes the need to improve the partnership with FOs to achieve the expected results of its interventions. Based on corporative assessment documents, it is recommended the resilience of rural communities be promoted through support to farmers' and other community-based organizations to effectively deliver services and strengthen their capacity to engage in policy dialogue. Moreover, participation of FOs from project design is key for fostering FOs' sense of ownership of infrastructure built and guarantee its sustainable management. Also, adequate capacity building, training and support of FOs are essential when projects rely on decentralized structures for sustainability.¹²

The **2024 Farmers' Forum celebrates the 20th anniversary** of its creation. It is therefore a golden opportunity to look at the global trend of evolution in the IFAD–FO partnership since it started being measured through the Partnership in Progress (PiP) reports, and to take stock of progress, achievements and main constraints.

This **"Partnership in Progress: 2020–2023"** report takes stock of IFAD's different modalities of collaboration with FOs based on surveys submitted to IFAD country directors (CDs) throughout the five IFAD regions. It provides a quantitative analysis of modalities and trends of collaboration between FOs and IFAD within IFAD's operating instruments: (i) IFAD country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) designs, IFAD investment project designs and IFAD investment project implementation (**Section I**); and (ii) IFAD direct grants to FOs (**Section III**). It also explores how the regional FAFOs (R-FAFOs) that were organized for the second time in the five regions¹³ positively influenced the partnership between FOs and IFAD at regional and national levels (**Section II**). Finally, this report reviews the key findings of the Section I quantitative analysis, several case studies and concrete examples of IFAD–FO partnerships across regions (see boxes and cases studies in the report) and the results of a survey submitted to FOs, IFAD country teams and IFAD project management units (PMUs) in the context of the regional FAFOs, in order to propose actions for partnership improvement (**Section IV**).

¹² More details about the findings presented in key IFAD assessments and research reports are presented in the Annex I.

¹³ Seven Regional Farmers' Forum events organized in the five regions: one in Asia and the Pacific Division (APR), West and Central Africa Division (WCA) and East and Southern Africa Division, 2 in Near East, North Africa and Europe Division (NEN) and 2 in Latin America and the Caribbean Division (LAC) between September 2022 and January 2023), gathering a total of 566 representatives of FOs, IFAD and partners.



Section I: Quantitative analysis of country-level partnerships supported by new IFAD strategies and its new and ongoing investment projects

Section I: Quantitative analysis of country-level partnerships supported by new IFAD strategies and its new and ongoing investment projects

This section presents the evolution of the partnership between IFAD and FOs in the design of new IFAD COSOPs, as well as the design and implementation of investment projects. For this year's PiP report, trends of the development of the partnership at global and regional levels are presented by biennium, from 2008–2009 until 2022–2023. The quantitative information presented in this section is complemented with case studies¹⁴ that highlight some of the findings of the data analysis.

A survey was sent to IFAD CDs to collect their feedback on the involvement of FOs at country level and in the new IFAD COSOPs and investment projects approved in the 2020–2023 period. The 2023 survey follows the same methodology implemented in the 2019 survey.¹⁵ Three types of surveys were submitted to CDs to review IFAD–FO partnerships in:

- 1) New COSOPs approved in 2020–2023
- 2) New projects approved in 2022–2023
- 3) Ongoing projects approved in 2020–2021

It is worth noting that during the first two years (2021–2022), participation of FOs might have been restricted due to COVID-19 safety measures, which included limited mobility.

From 2020 to 2023, 37 new COSOPs were approved (as compared to 55 during the 2016–2019 cycle) and 85 investment projects – 50 ongoing projects approved in 2020–2021 and 35 new projects approved in 2022–2023¹⁶ (as compared to 79 projects in 2016–2017 and 76 projects in 2018–2019). The surveys' response rates were 64.9 per cent for the survey on involvement of FOs in COSOPs, 66 per cent for the survey on involvement in projects approved between 2020 and 2021, and 40 per cent for the survey on involvement in projects approved between 2022 and 2023. Response rates were higher than those obtained in 2016–2019 for involvement in COSOP design (51%) and projects approved in 2016–2017 (40%), but lower than the response rate for projects approved in 2018–2019 (57%).

As with the last PiP report, this report uses two classifications, as described below.

(1) Level of participation of FOs in the design of IFAD COSOPs or projects using the following categories¹⁷:

- **No participation:** FOs were not invited to participate in COSOPs or project design.
- **Basic level of participation:** This category includes all basic types of modalities in which FOs were invited, as any other stakeholders, to participate in the COSOP and project design process, but without being assigned a specific role in shaping the design. Such modalities, which can sometimes be combined, include: participation in the COSOP/project validation workshops; bilateral meetings with the CD or design team; and participation in multi-stakeholder consultations.
- **Advanced level of participation:** This category includes all advanced types of modalities in which FOs were recognized as strategic stakeholders closely involved in the COSOP and project design process, including participation in design-related workshops or organizing their own internal FO-led workshops to better shape their contribution.

(2) Modalities of FOs' involvement in the implementation of IFAD investment projects, playing a "strategic role" and/or "operational role", based on a differentiated and increasing scale of FO responsibility and ownership, as presented in the following table:

¹⁴ Case studies are developed from the responses gathered from the survey sent to PMUs (and spread across the document) as well as other case studies gathered from internal documents and reports.

¹⁵ The full methodology is provided in Annex II (including details on the response rate)

¹⁶ See full list of new projects and COSOPs approved in 2020–2023 in Annex III.

¹⁷ Note: In the previous PiP reports, "basic level of participation" and "advanced level of participation" were called "simple player" and "special player", respectively.

Table 1: Classification of the role of FOs in project implementation

Strategic role	1	Participation of FOs in supervision missions (field and/or wrap-up meeting)
	2	Formal membership in the steering committee of the project
Operational role	1	Inclusion of FOs in component(s) as direct beneficiaries of capacity-building/institutional development activities
	2	Involvement of FOs in components as service providers
	3	Involvement of FOs in components as implementing partners
	4	Assignment of full responsibility for the management of one or more components

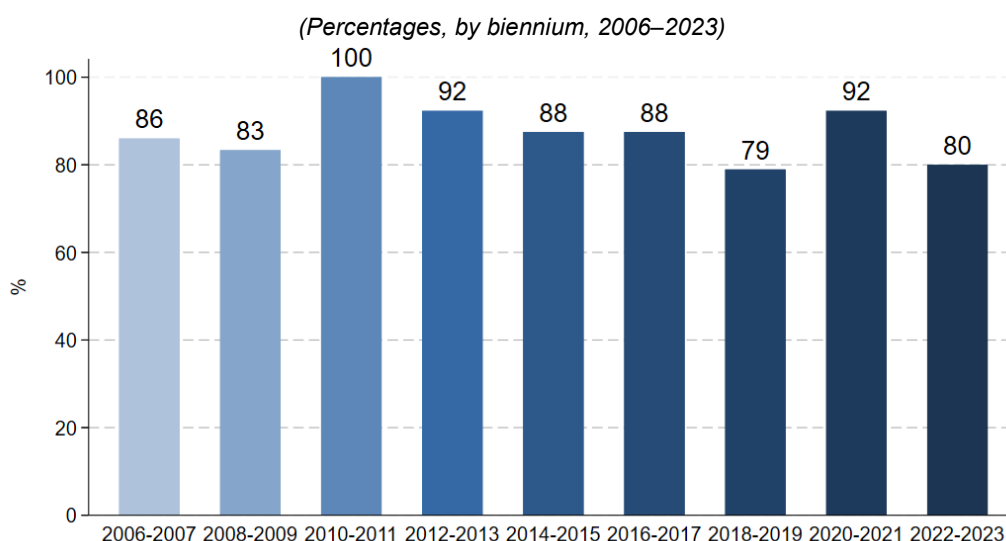
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Also, using information from previous FAFO surveys, this section presents the evolution in the level of FOs' involvement of each country in COSOP design for countries that undertook more than one COSOP design process in 2008–2023. Finally, for this PiP report, the level of involvement of FOs in COSOP design obtained from the surveys delivered between 2008 and 2023 and the performance of the country strategies obtained from the COSOP evaluations performed by the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) of IFAD have been linked as a first step to gather evidence about the effects of the partnership on the outcomes of IFAD interventions.

A. Evolving partnership with FOs in COSOP design

FOs' participation in COSOP design is remaining a norm, and global participation improved slightly since the last FAFO (see Figure 1). FOs' involvement in COSOP design in 2020–2021 and 2022–2023 was 92.3 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively, of total survey responses.

Figure 1: Evolution of FOs participation in COSOP design

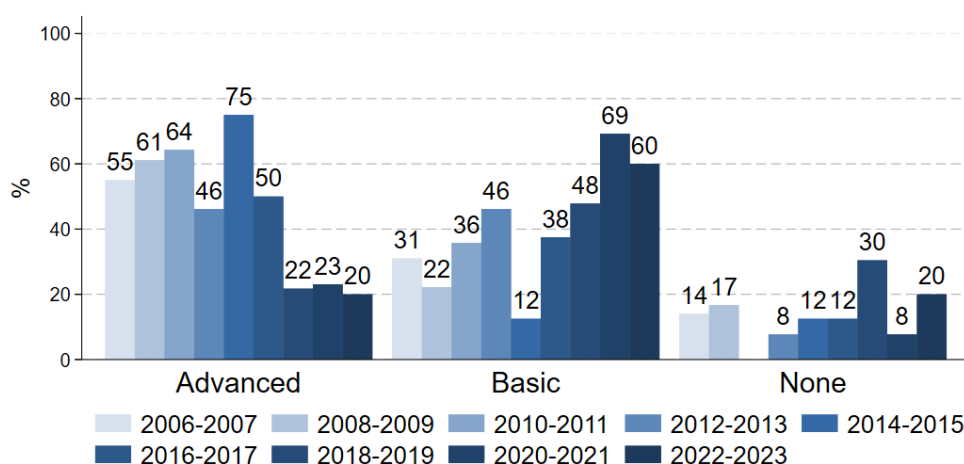


Regional differences in participation are important, as shown in the graphs compiled in Annex IV¹⁸. Most regions show high participation rates in COSOP design between 2008 and 2023. However, a slight drop in participation is observed in LAC, APR and WCA, while NEN and ESA show a slight increase in participation.

The level of FOs' involvement in COSOP design has significantly decreased, although the overall participation of FOs remains high. As shown in Figure 2, the percentage of countries that reported an "Advanced level of participation" of FOs in the design process has significantly decreased over time, while cases of "Basic level of participation" of FOs has increased.

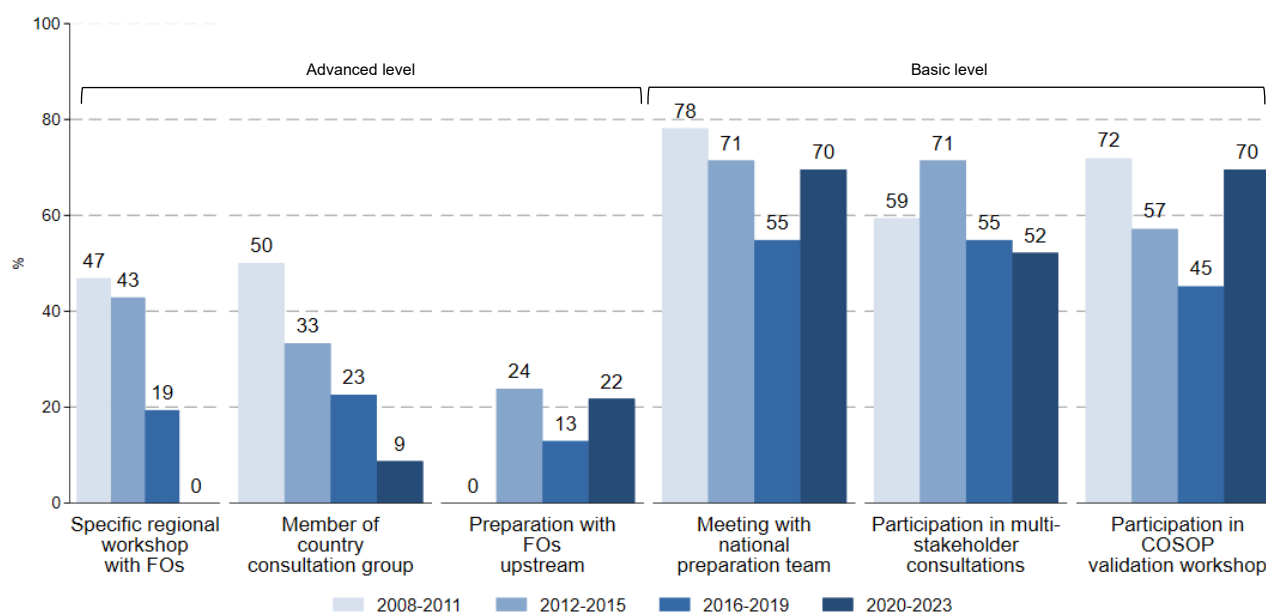
¹⁸ Annex IV presents the detailed quantitative graphs and figures for the survey submitted to CDs

Figure 2: Evolution of FOs participation in COSOP design over the past 18 years (2006-2023)
(Percentages, by biennium and level of involvement)



As an example, data in Figure 3 below shows that FOs have been less supported to organize or participate in specific FO regional workshops, and their participation as part of the national consultation groups also significantly declined.

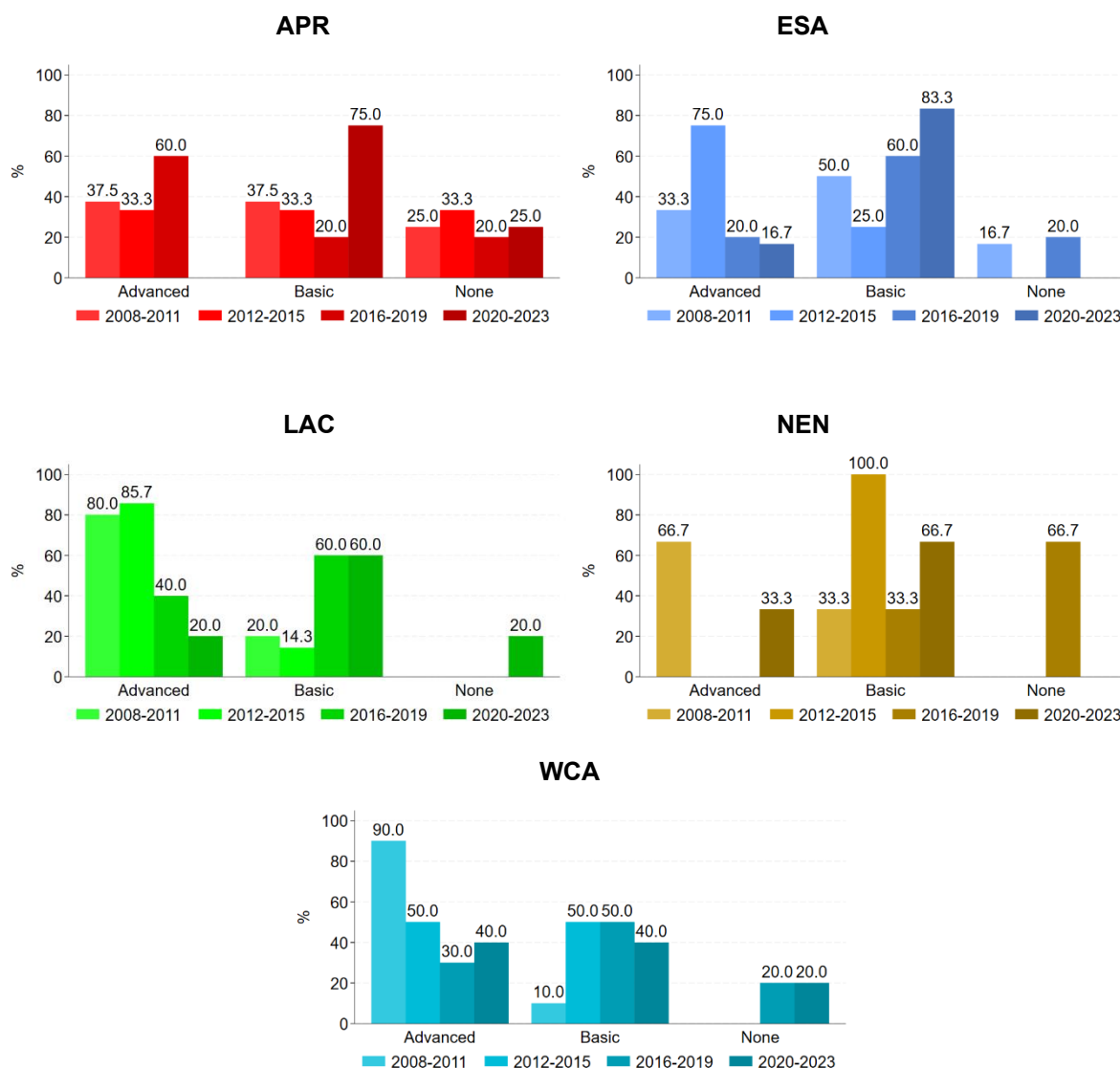
Figure 3: Involvement of FOs in the COSOP design: modalities
(Percentages, for the periods 2008-2011, 2012-2015, 2016-2019, 2020-2023)



A potential explanation of these changes is that, out of the 23 responses obtained in 2020–2023, 13 responses (57%) correspond to COSOPs approved during 2020 and 2021, when mobility was heavily affected due to COVID-19 restrictions. For example, four out of five responses from LAC correspond to COSOPs approved in those years. Although workshops could have been implemented virtually, COVID-19 restrictions might explain the limited involvement of FOs during 2020–2023 for COSOP design. Another explanation might be related to the limited resources allocated to COSOP design processes, which is preventing CDs from holding concrete preparatory events with FOs to collect their inputs.

Trends between regions differ on the level of involvement in COSOP design. Figure 4 below shows that “Advanced level of participation” of FOs in APR, ESA and LAC regions has significantly decreased with respect to previous periods. Moreover, no “Advanced level of participation” is reported in APR for 2020–2023. However, the level of participation has significantly increased in NEN and slightly increased in WCA in 2016–2019.

Figure 4 Evolution of FOs participation in COSOP design over the past 16 years (2008-2023)
(Percentages, by regions and level of involvement)



Box 1: Participation of FOs in COSOP design during COVID-19

- Togo experienced a good consultation of FOs, including the FO-driven National Committee for Family Farming, despite the consultation being virtual because of COVID-19.
- In Mali, it is interesting to note that IFAD provided a small envelope for the Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du Mali (CNOP-Mali) to undertake consultation prior the COSOP design; in the past (see 2012–2013 PiP report), IFAD had given more resources to enhance FOs' participation in the COSOP design; it was provided through the Association Française de Développement International (member of the Consortium of NGOs, AgriCord), which helped FOs organize regional workshops to assess the past COSOP and make proposals in the new one.
- Based on the results of the regional FAFO surveys, FOs from Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Central Africa Republic, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Peru, Rwanda and South Sudan received funding from IFAD to organize workshops for COSOP design.

Analysis on the evolving roles of FOs in COSOP design over the 2008–2023 period

The data collected through the survey to CDs shows that the role of FOs changed in different periods (see table 2 below). From the 33 countries that reported more than one COSOP design process over the period and answered the survey, data shows a decline in the level of participation of FOs in COSOP design in 18 countries (in **Orange**), while in 6 countries it improved (in **Green**), and in 9 countries no changes were observed (in **Blue**). It is worth noting the case of Vietnam, which reported a significant improvement in the level of participation of FOs in COSOP design, from no participation in 2008–2011 to an “advanced level of participation” in 2020–2023. For the case of Vietnam, the Vietnam National Farmers’ Union (VNFU) mostly provides financial services to local FOs. Also, VNFU has signed a Cooperation Agreement with IFAD to formalize the joint work with Vietnamese FOs within the country portfolio, which is a good practice in the region and at global level.

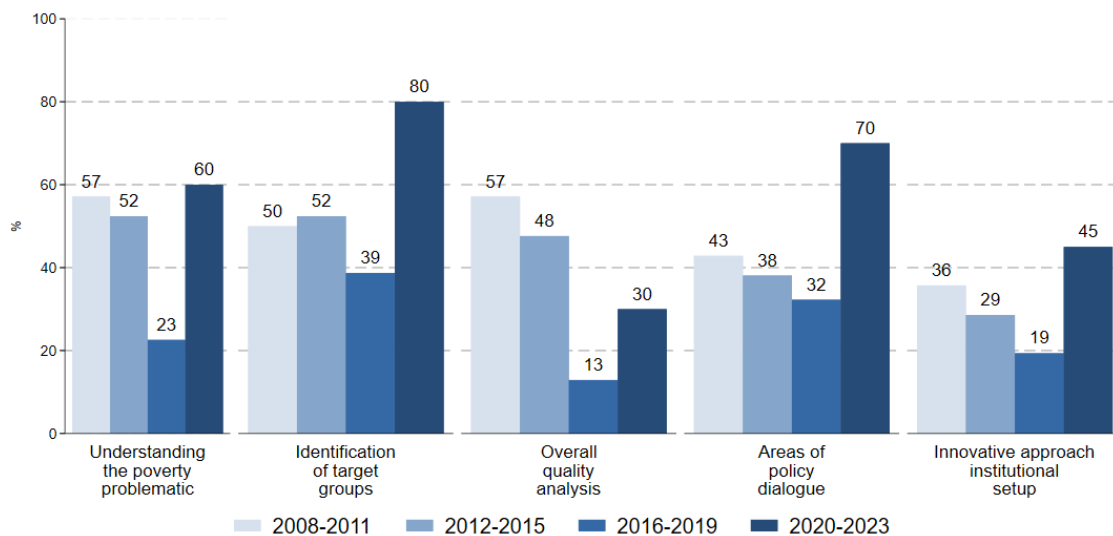
Table 2: Level of participation of FOs in COSOP design, by country and period

Country	2008-2011	2012-2015	2016-2019	2020-2023
Benin	Advanced Level		Basic Level	
Bolivia		Advanced Level		Advanced Level
Brazil	Basic Level		Advanced Level	
Burundi	Basic Level			Basic Level
Cambodia		Advanced Level		Basic Level
Chad	Advanced Level			Advanced Level
China	Basic Level		No participation	
Colombia			Basic Level	No participation
Congo	Advanced Level		Basic Level	
Cote D'Ivoire	Advanced Level			Basic Level
DR Congo	Advanced Level		No participation	
Dominican Republic	Advanced Level		Advanced Level	
Egypt		Basic Level	No participation	
Eritrea			No participation	Basic Level
Guatemala	Advanced Level			Basic Level
Haiti	Advanced Level	Advanced Level		
Honduras		Basic Level		Basic Level
India	Basic Level		Basic Level	
Indonesia	Advanced Level		Advanced Level	Basic Level
Laos	Basic Level		Advanced Level	
Liberia	Advanced Level		Basic Level	
Malawi	Basic Level		Advanced Level	
Mexico		Advanced Level		Basic Level
Nepal		Advanced Level		Basic Level
Nigeria	Advanced Level			Basic Level
Pakistan	Advanced Level			No participation
Rwanda		Basic Level	Basic Level	
Senegal	Advanced Level		Advanced Level	
Sierra Leone	Basic Level		Basic Level	No participation
Syria	Advanced Level		No participation	
Tajikistan			No participation	Basic Level
Uganda		Advanced Level		Basic Level
Vietnam	No participation	Basic Level	Advanced Level	

Blue: Didn't change, Orange: Changed from more important to less important, Green: Changed from less important to more important

Overall, IFAD country teams report that COSOP design improves with FOs’ participation, as presented in Figure 5 below. During 2008–2023, an average of 76 per cent of survey participants recognized that COSOP design processes had benefited from FOs’ participation. Specifically, the main improvements resulting from FOs’ participation in COSOP design are in the areas of “identification of the target group” (80%) and “policy dialogue” (70%), followed closely by “understanding the poverty problematic (60%).

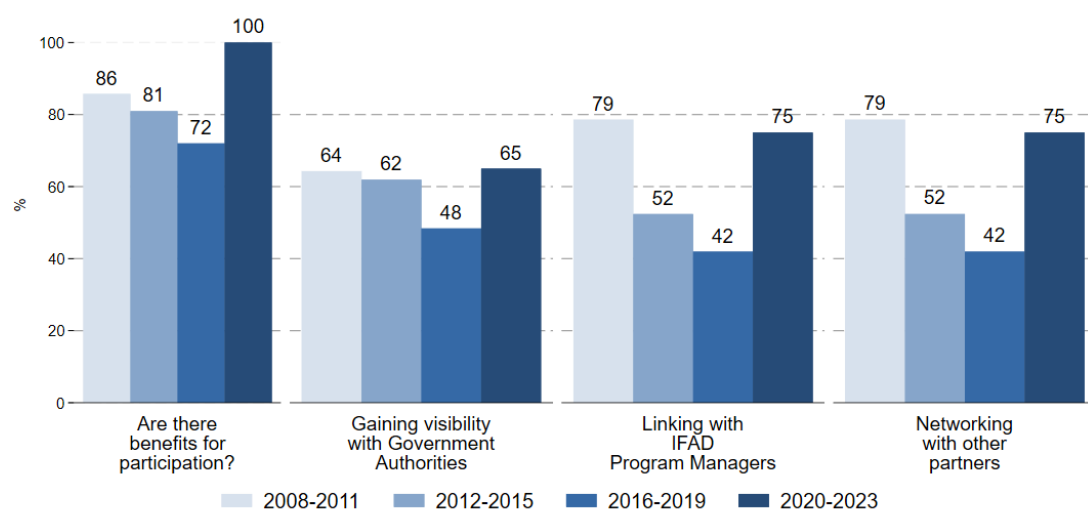
Figure 5: Improvements in COSOP design due to participation of FOs by period
(Percentages, for the period 2008–2023)



Improvements due to FOs’ participation vary across regions¹⁹. In terms of regional specificities, the perception of improvement of COSOPs due to the participation of FOs remained constant in LAC, NEN and WCA, while a decline between the period 2016–2019 and 2020–2023 is observed in APR and ESA. Also, FOs as promoters of innovative approaches for institutional setup are significant in LAC, whereas facilitating areas of policy dialogue is highlighted as an important improvement in APR, NEN and ESA.

All IFAD country teams acknowledged that FOs benefited from their involvement in COSOP design. Specifically, their participation helped FOs to improve their link with IFAD programme managers (75%), to improve their network with other partners (75%), and to gain in visibility with authorities (65%), as shown in Figure 6. Affirmative responses towards these types of benefits globally increased with respect to the previous period.

Figure 6: Benefits to FO from participating in COSOP design by period
(Percentages, by type of benefits, for the period 2008–2023)



¹⁹ See detailed graphs per region in the Annex IV

FOs' participation and COSOP assessment undertaken by IOE

Using the assessment reports developed by IOE, the performance of the COSOP has been linked with the participation of FOs in its design and implementation. The COSOP assessment assigns a score between 0 and 6 to 11 criteria indicators predefined by IOE²⁰, and an overall score for the COSOP.

It was possible to link the assessment of COSOPs with a maximum of 26 survey responses between 2008 and 2019, although not all the criteria indicators have the same number of observations matched. Table 3 summarizes the average score obtained for each criterion indicator by level of participation of FOs.

Table 3: Average score obtained in COSOP assessment, by criteria and level of participation of FO

Criteria indicator	Leve of participation		
	Advanced	Basic	No participation
<i>Rural Poverty Impact</i>			
Mean	4.08	4.33	4.00
Number of responses	13	6	1
<i>Project Performance</i>			
Mean	3.84	4.04	3.50
Number of responses	8	8	2
<i>Relevance</i>			
Mean	4.07	4.00	3.50
Number of responses	15	9	2
<i>Effectiveness</i>			
Mean	4.00	3.89	3.00
Number of responses	15	9	2
<i>Efficiency</i>			
Mean	3.46	3.50	2.00
Number of responses	13	6	1
<i>Sustainability</i>			
Mean	3.54	3.50	3.00
Number of responses	13	6	1
<i>Gender equality and women's empowerment</i>			
Mean	4.08	4.00	3.00
Number of responses	13	6	1
<i>Innovation</i>			
Mean	4.15	4.50	4.00
Number of responses	13	6	1
<i>Scaling up</i>			
Mean	3.58	3.67	.
Number of responses	12	6	0
<i>Environmental and natural resource management</i>			
Mean	4.00	4.17	3.00
Number of responses	13	6	1
<i>Adaptation to climate change</i>			
Mean	3.77	4.17	3.00
Number of responses	13	6	1
<i>Overall COSOP achievement</i>			
Mean	3.92	3.86	3.00
Number of responses	12	7	2

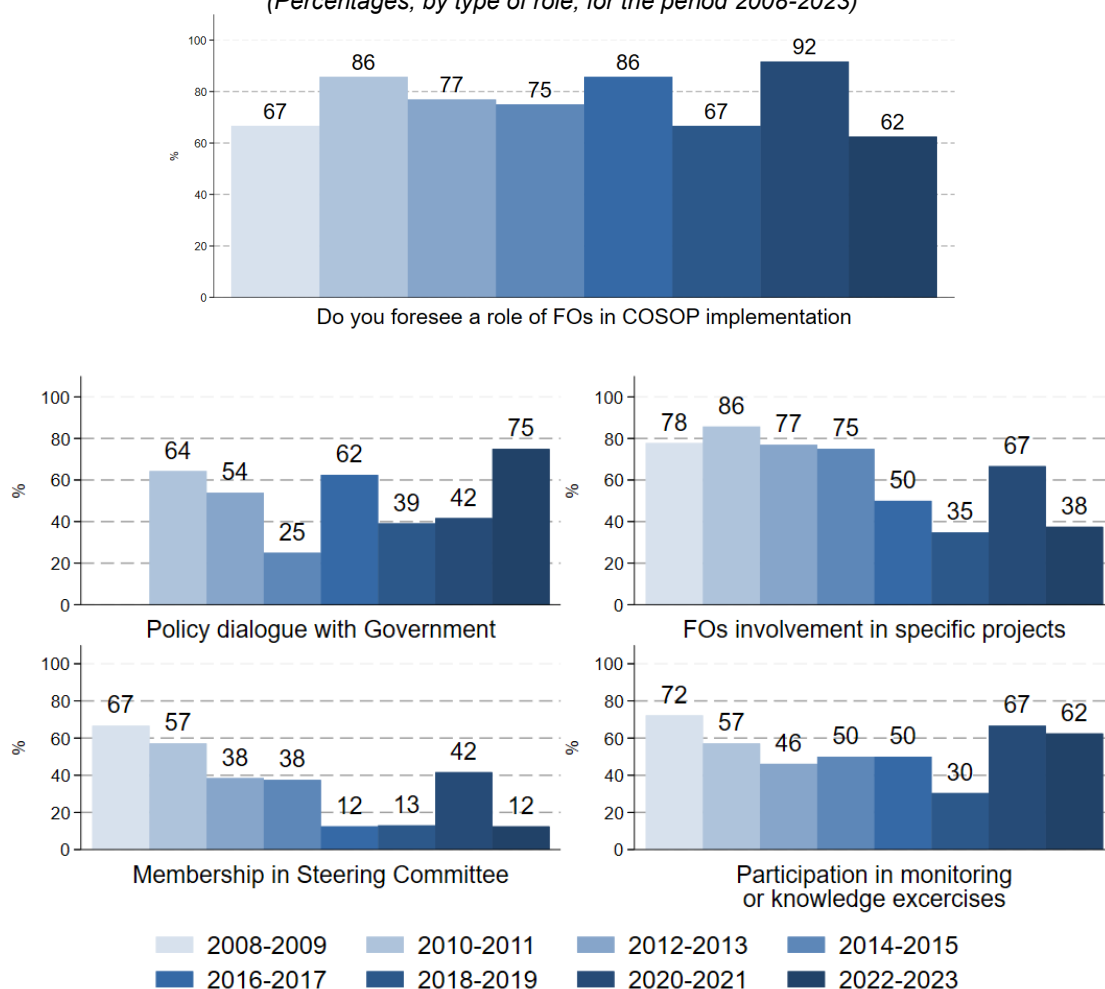
In general, COSOPs' design processes where FOs participate tend to show a better performance in most of the assessment criteria, especially for effectiveness, efficiency and overall performance. Nevertheless, these results must be taken with caution, given the low number of observations included, especially for those cases where countries reported no participation of FOs. Moreover, their factors that are not considered in the analysis might have affected the performance of the COSOP. Therefore, **further analysis must be performed to obtain conclusive results.**

²⁰ The indicators are 1) Rural poverty impact, 2) Overall project performance, 3) Relevance of COSOP, 4) Effectiveness, 5) Efficiency, 6) Sustainability, 7) Gender equality and women's empowerment, 8) Innovation, 9) Scaling up, 10) Environmental and natural resources, 11) Adaptation to climate change, and 12) Overall COSOP achievement.

FOs as COSOP implementers

Countries also reported how FOs are foreseen to participate in COSOP implementation in the future. In general, most countries foresee a role for FOs in COSOP implementation, mostly in policy dialogue (75%), participation in monitoring and knowledge generation (63%) and to a lesser extent involvement in specific projects (23%). While the perception of countries regarding the role of FOs in policy dialogue has increased over time, other roles of FOs remain unchanged or decreased, as shown in figure 7.

Figure 7: Foreseen role of FOs in COSOP implementation
(Percentages, by type of role, for the period 2008-2023)



Moreover, differences across regions on the importance of each role are worth analysing.²¹ The perception of country offices on the FOs having a role in COSOP implementation has decreased in APR compared to 2016–2019, while other regions do not show any changes. Also, the foreseen role of FOs in policy dialogue has declined in LAC, ESA and WCA, while in NEN and APR it has increased with respect to 2016–2019, while their role in monitoring and knowledge generation has increased in all regions except APR. Also, in LAC, participation in projects remains as the most important role of FOs in COSOP implementation.

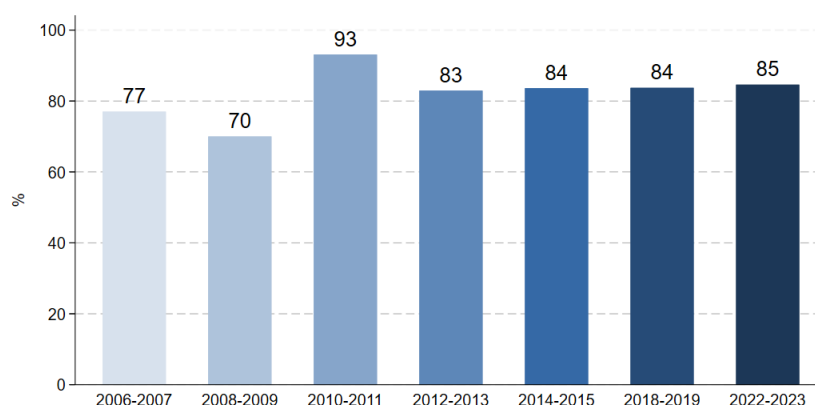
²¹ See detailed graphs per region in Annex IV.

B. Evolving partnership with FOs in the projects approved in the biennium 2022–2023

In 2022–2023, FOs participated in 85 per cent of the 13 projects designed where responses were obtained (out of 35 projects approved), with a level of participation slightly higher than previous periods, although the response rate was significantly lower compared to previous periods. The data shows that the majority of types of FOs involved are national FO platforms (45%) and apex commodity FOs (27%). In 73 per cent of the projects (compared to 56% in the last period), a mapping of FOs was undertaken during the design process.

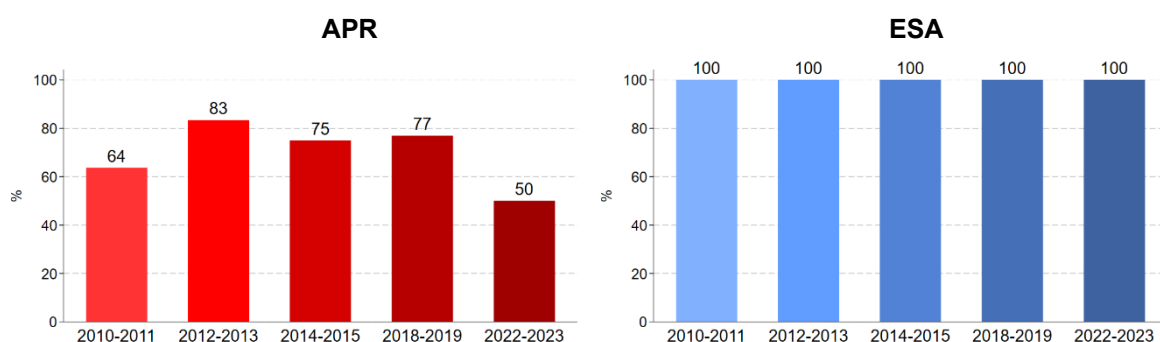
Data in Figure 8 shows that **FO's participation in project design remains stable, at around 85 per cent on average over the last decade**, confirming the stability of this kind of collaboration over time.

Figure 8: Evolution of FOs participation in project design over the last 18 years²²
(Percentages, by biennium, 2006–2023)

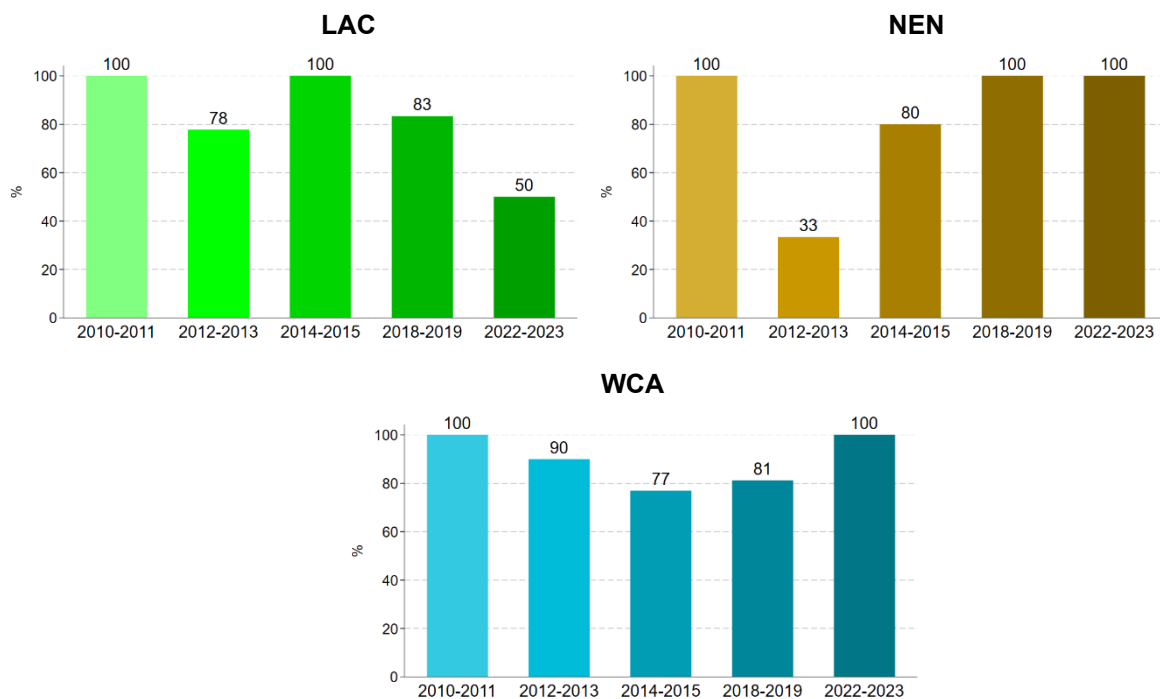


There are regional differences, as shown below in Figure 9. APR and LAC have recently shown a significant decrease in the participation of FOs in the design of projects, while WCA increased over the last period, and NEN and ESA remained high. It is worth noting the 100 per cent participation rates of FOs in ESA since 2010.

Figure 9: Evolution of participation of FOs in project design over the period 2010–2023
(Percentages, by regions and period)

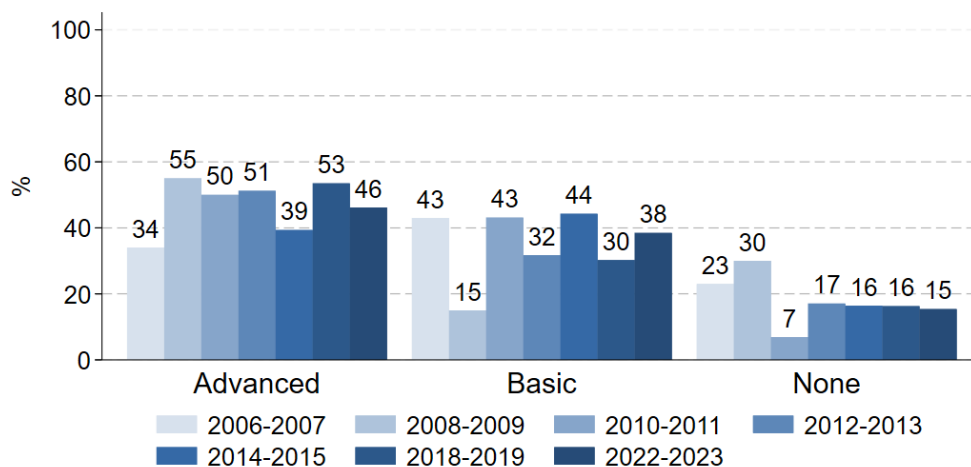


²² Similarly, as for 2016–2017, data for 2020–2021 is blank since it was not possible to collect actual information on the involvement of FOs in projects' designs during this period due to the important turnover of IFAD CDs in the last 3 to 4 years and the impossibility to recall the detailed circumstances of their design. As this has been explained in the introduction paragraph, the survey on projects designed in 2020–2021 only focused on the involvement of FOs in the implementation of these projects. Idem for Figure 9, 10, 11 and 12



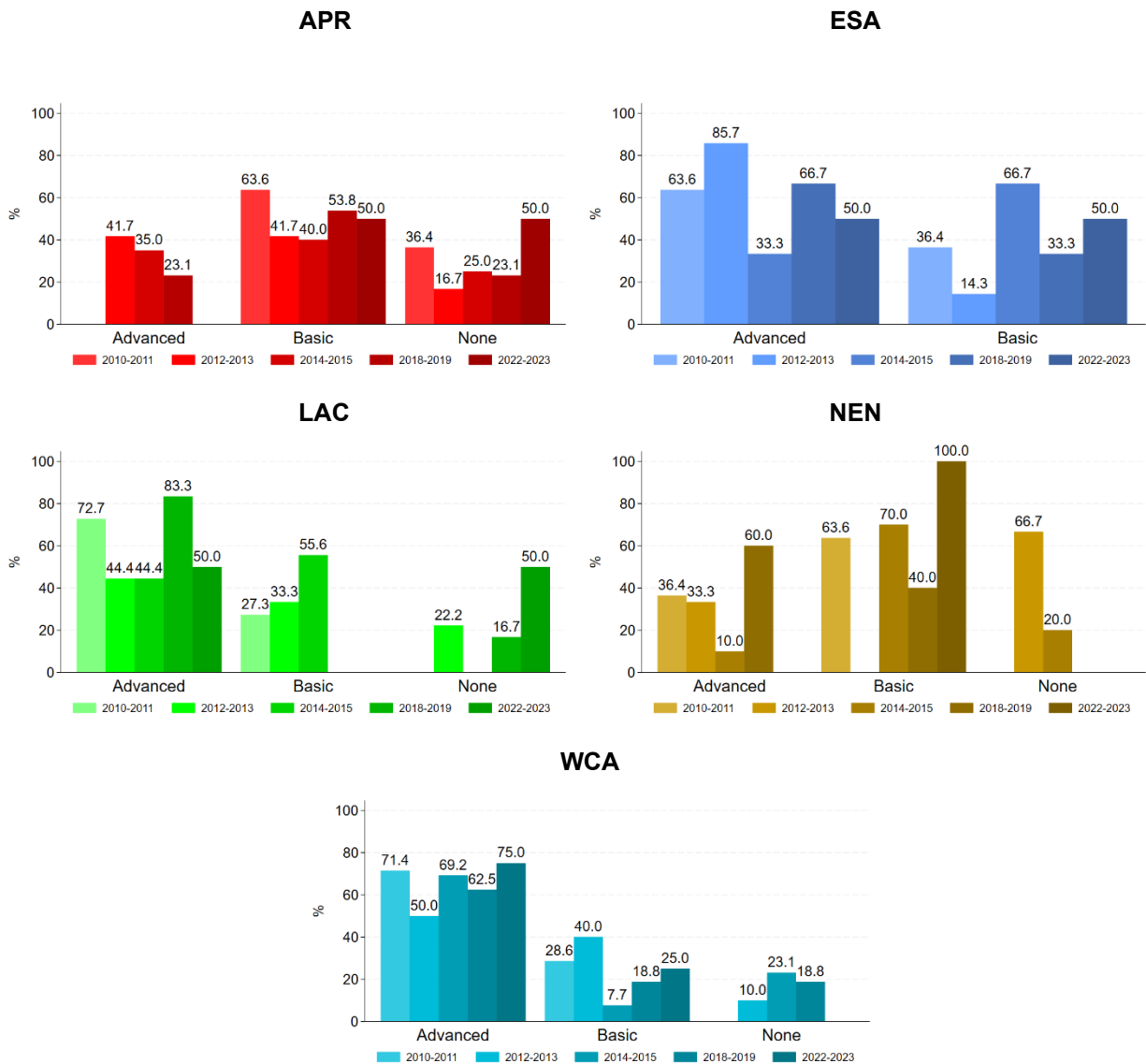
The level of participation of FOs in project design has been globally stable, although Figure 10 shows that the "Advanced level of participation" has decreased in the past period under review. In 2008–2009, the level of participation of FOs was advanced for 55 per cent of project designs. This percentage dropped to 46 per cent by 2022–2023. Moreover, 82 per cent of respondents reported that FOs' participation influenced the design.

Figure 10: Evolution of FOs participation in project design over the last 18 years (Percentages, by type of involvement, over the period 2006–2023)



Also, the trend differs across regions. "Advanced level of participation" of FOs in project design in APR, LAC and ESA shows an important drop with respect to previous years while the "Basic level of participation" of FOs is increasing. In NEN, both levels are increasing, in accordance with the overall higher participation of FOs in IFAD activities in this region, as also observed in the COSOP design chapter. In WCA, a small increase can be observed between 2018–2019 and 2022–2023, but no major changes in the trend can be identified.

Figure 11: Evolution of FOs participation in project design over the past 14 years (2010-2023)
(Percentages, by regions and level of involvement)



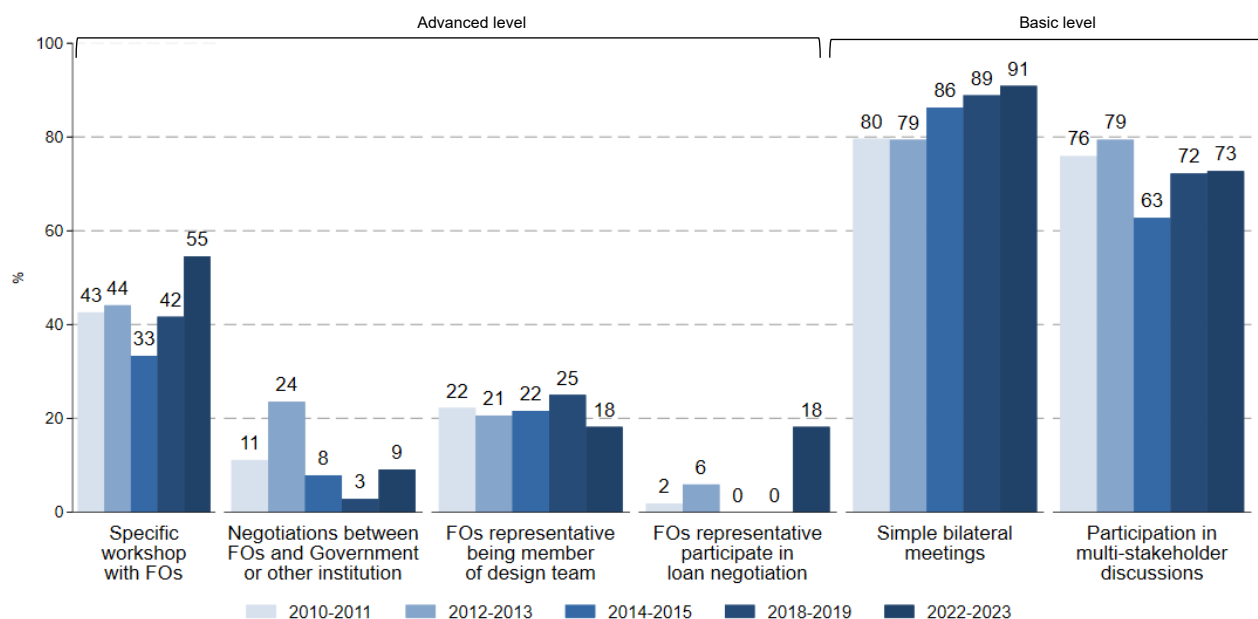
Data in Figure 12 below shows that most projects reported that FOs had a “Basic level of participation” in the project design process. Indeed, in 91 per cent of designs, FOs were participating in simple bilateral meetings; and in 73 per cent, they were participating in multi-stakeholder discussions. However, it is worth noting that the third most adopted way to engage with FOs in project design is the organization of specific workshops with FOs, which presents itself in 55 per cent of responses in 2022, an increasing trend over time.

Box 2: Participation of FOs in project design – FOs’ feedback²³

Of the 92 FOs that responded to the FO survey submitted in the context of the regional FAFO events, 35 organizations reported their involvement in new project design. All participated in multi-stakeholder consultations and most of them (32) participated in design workshops. Also, 18 organizations reported receiving funding to organize workshops with local FOs for project design, and only 5 organizations reported being part of the design team. These organizations are in Benin, Brazil, Central African Republic, Mali and Nigeria. Four out of five organizations are national FO representatives and one organization from Nigeria represented rural women.

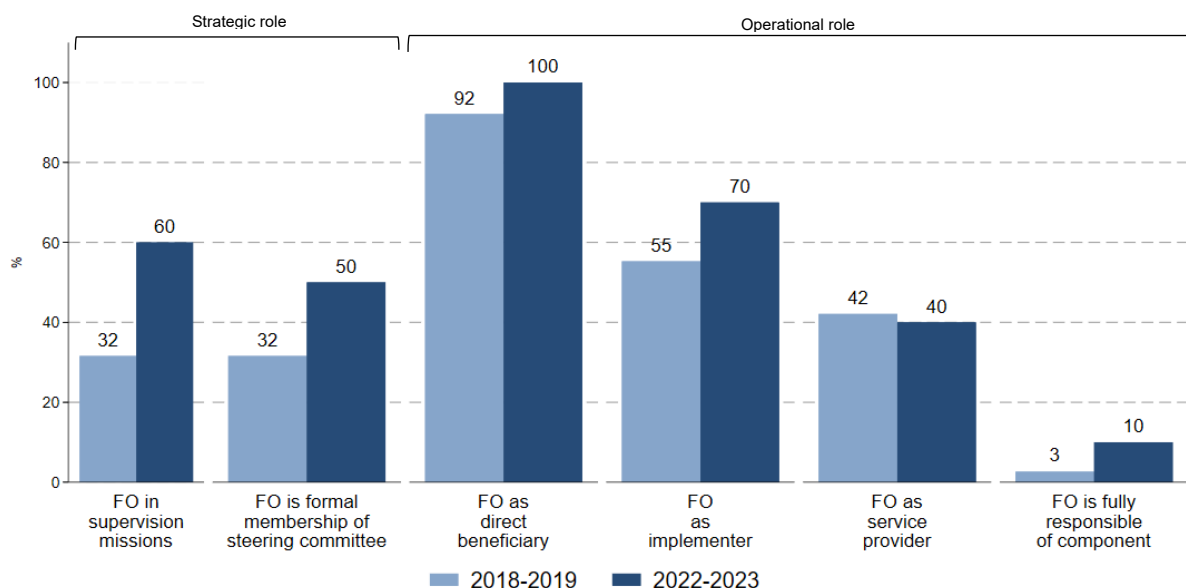
²³ The FO survey was submitted prior the regional FAFOs 2022/2023 in three regions (ESA, LAC and WCA).

Figure 12: Involvement of FOs in the project design: Modalities
(Percentages, by type of participation and by modality, for the period 2010-2023)



Foreseen participation of FOs in project implementation (as per design documents) remains high and their foreseen roles – both operational and strategic – have increased. FOs are planned to be involved in project implementation in 91 per cent of the projects that were under design during 2022–2023. Also, both operational and strategic foreseen roles of FOs in project implementation have increased in 2022–2023 with respect to 2018–2019: more than 60 per cent and 50 per cent of respondents see FOs as participants in supervision missions and members of steering committees in 2022–2023, respectively, as shown in Figure 13. It is interesting to note that for operational roles, the most empowering modalities (FOs as project implementers and as managing a full component²⁴) have increased between the two periods of analysis.

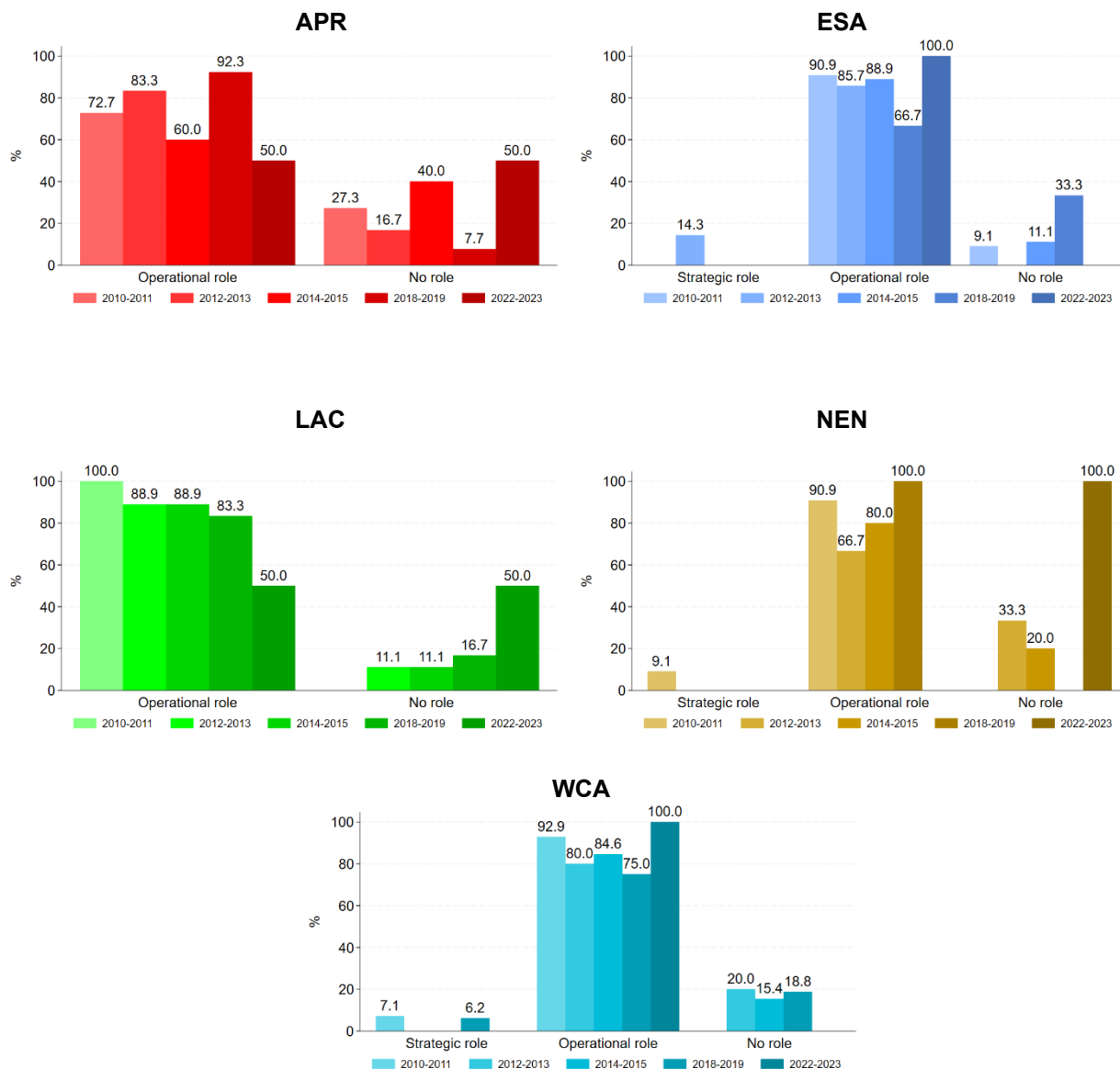
Figure 13: Foreseen participation of FOs in project implementation: Modalities
(Percentages, by type of modality, for the period 2018-2023)



²⁴ This is the case of the PSSRC Project in Burkina Faso, PDEA project in Cameroon, PEAJ project in Central African Republic, the AVENIR project in DRC, EMPRENDER project in Ecuador, SAPEMP project in Eswatini, HDDAP project in Indonesia, PSAC and RDDP2 projects in Rwanda, and HEEP project in Zimbabwe.

However, there are regional differences, with some regions reporting fewer operational roles foreseen for FOs in the new designs. The importance of FOs as project operators has been high in all regions, usually more than 86 per cent of respondents.²⁵ Nevertheless, APR and LAC experienced a decline in rates of participation of FOs in operational roles between 2018–2019 and 2022–2023: from 92 per cent to 50 per cent in APR; and from 83 per cent to 50 per cent in LAC.

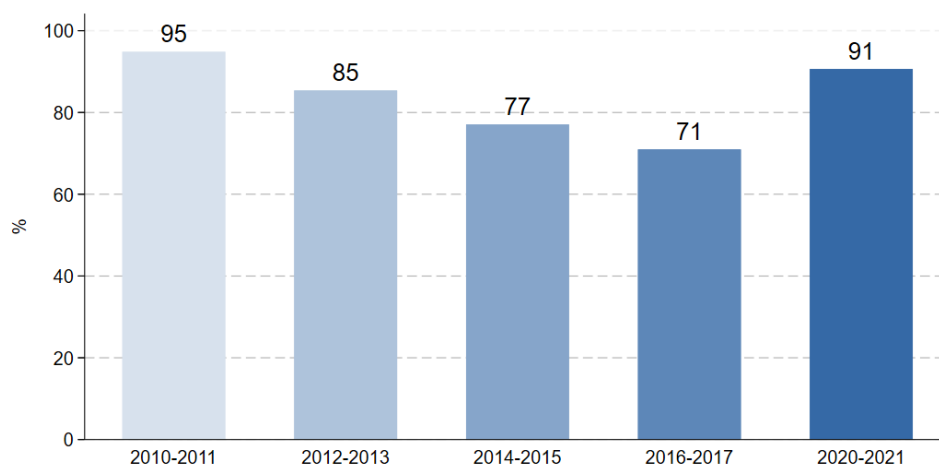
Figure 14: Evolution of foreseen role of FOs in project implementation over the past 14 years (2010-2023) (Percentages, by regions and level of involvement)



²⁵ This percentage is the combined percentage of “survey respondents” who selected any of the three operational roles in their response.

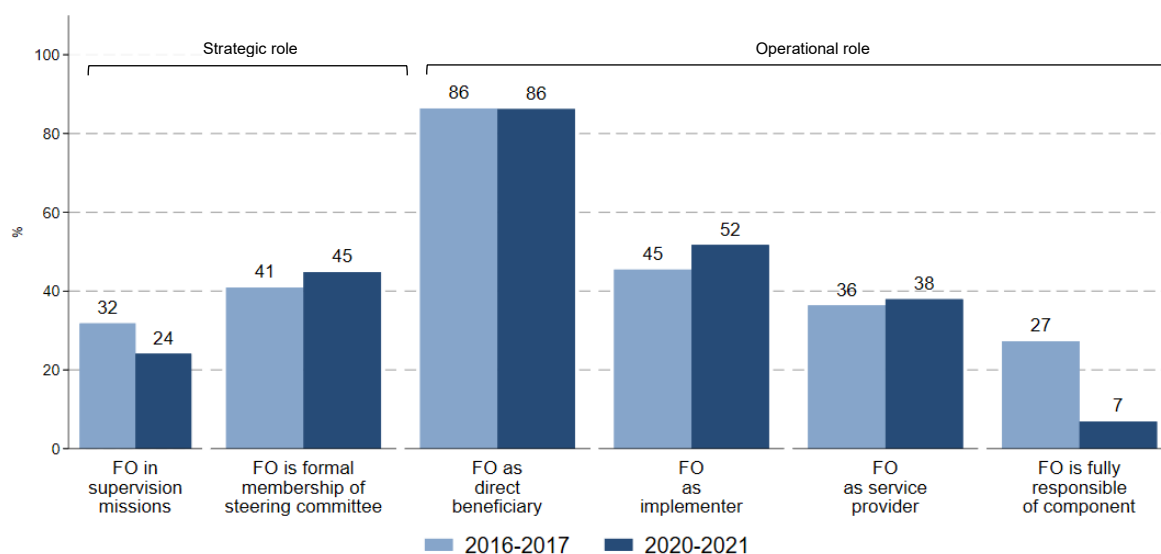
C. Involvement of FOs in the implementation of ongoing projects approved in 2020–2021

Figure 15: Evolution of FOs' participation in project implementation over the last 11 years (Percentages, on the period 2010-2021)



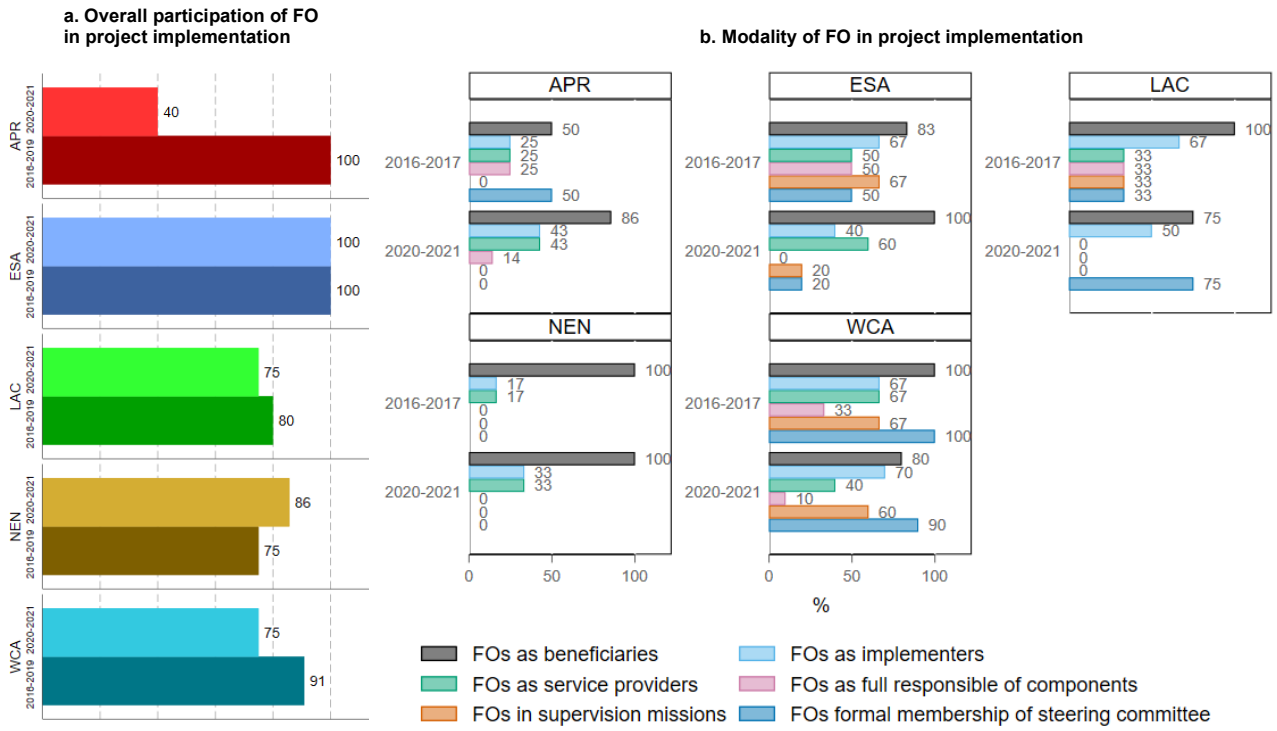
There was a significant increase in the participation of FOs in project implementation. Involvement of FOs in the implementation of projects has increased from 71 per cent in the last PiP report to an average of 91 per cent over the last period. However, in most of the projects (86%), FOs are involved as beneficiaries, with no change in the trend between 2016–2017 and 2020–2021. Also, FOs' role as implementing partners has increased in the same period, from 45 per cent to 52 per cent of responses, while the percentage of projects where FOs are fully responsible for the implementation of a component dropped from 27 per cent in 2016-2017 to 7 per cent in 2020–2021.

Figure 16: Participation of FOs in project implementation: Modalities (Percentages, by type of modality, for the periods 2016-2016 and 2020-2021)



Most regions prioritize the operational role of FOs in implementation. The most common modality of participation is as beneficiary, with 86 per cent of the responses. However, also important is the role of FOs as implementers, with more than 40 per cent of responses in APR, ESA, LAC and WCA. Regarding strategic roles, FOs as members of steering committees has increased, especially in WCA and LAC, while FOs as part of supervision missions has increased in WCA.

Figure 17: Overall participation of FOs in project implementation and modality, by period and region (2016–2023)



Case study

Improving the production of wool and mohair in partnership with the Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNWMGA): the experience of the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project

Context. The wool and mohair industry forms the bedrock of Lesotho's rural economy. Wool is the leading commodity exported by the Kingdom of Lesotho (hereafter Lesotho) and mohair is the fifth largest. Implemented between 2016 and 2023, the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP) addressed the country's production challenges in the wool and mohair value chains. In particular, the project boosted resilience to the adverse effects of climate change and economic shocks among around 200,000 poor, smallholder wool and mohair producers, focusing on the poorer mountain regions where sheep- and goat-herding is the main economic activity and means of subsistence for rural communities.

Working with the LNWMGA as a key strategic partner. WAMPP was coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and was jointly implemented by the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and the Ministry of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing. The LNWMGA and its associated growers' associations in 10 districts were one of the major strategic partners in project implementation. The LNWMGA is regarded as the biggest and most representative wool and mohair FO in Lesotho, with around 40,000 farmer members.

Intended roles of the LNWMGA in WAMPP. Their intended involvement covered multiple roles and broad-ranging responsibilities, some of which they had already performed before WAMPP:

- **Service provider:** LNWMGA played a critical role in delivering services to the farmers, particularly related to shearing, animal feed and drugs, artificial insemination activities and culling and exchange programme. All farmer-related matters were undertaken with the involvement of the LNWMGA.
- **Marketing channel:** The LNWMGA and its shearing sheds maintain exclusive marketing relations with a substantial South African broker in Lesotho, the company BKB.
- **Operations and maintenance of improved shearing sheds:** WAMPP renovated 28 existing shearing sheds and built 20 new sheds. All the shearing sheds are owned by the Government and managed by the LNWMGA through shearing shed associations.
- **Managing two sheep studs:** Two government breeding studs for sheep and goats were rehabilitated, stocked and subsequently managed by the LNWMGA.
- **Advocacy/policy development:** The LNWMGA acted as key partner in the development of a policy framework for the wool and mohair value chain.
- **Co-financing:** The LNWMGA was expected to provide co-financing to the project (US\$1.5 million, or 4% of total project costs).

Main results. WAMPP was completed by June 2023. It reached 52,017 households, slightly more than the target of 50,000. Key impacts of WAMPP and the FO engagement are: improved productivity; an increase in the production of wool and mohair of superior quality; improved governance structure; increased volume of sales and profitability; increased incomes of FO members; improved economic services to smallholder farmers; and increased access to affordable financing. In addition, by project completion a cumulative 547,491 hectares were brought under sustainable and climate-resilient management practices, almost doubling the baseline of 280,000 hectares.

In summary, the LNWMGA was most active and successful as a marketing channel. LNWMGA has constructive relations with a substantial South African broker, BKB, thus ensuring guaranteed access to markets, as well as input loans provided by BKB. BKB markets the vast majority (an estimated 70%) of the national clip in Lesotho.

Mixed performance was noted related to their role as service provider. Although there were some achievements regarding shearing, provision of animal feed and the culling and exchange

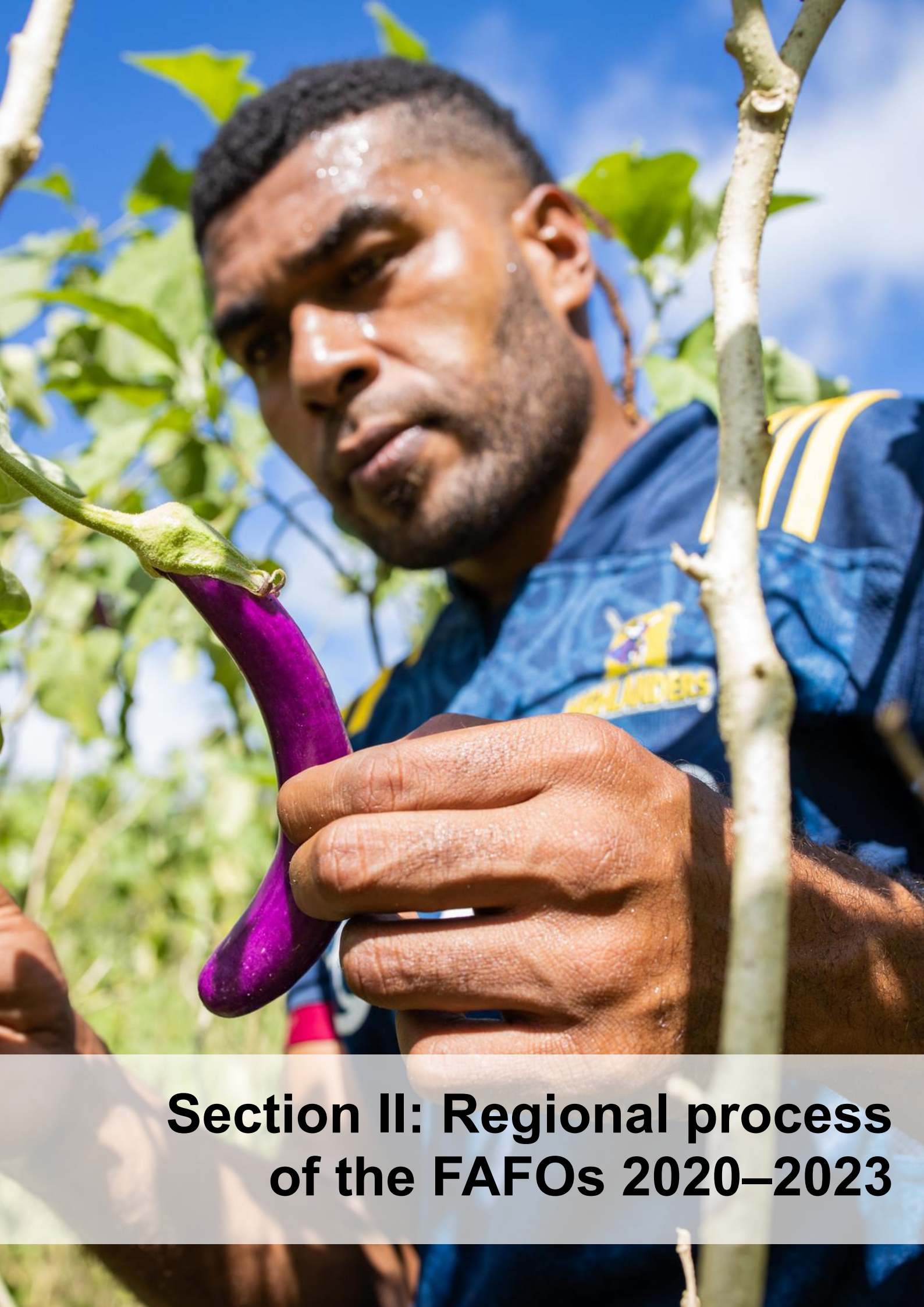
programme, there was a challenge to effectively run complex interventions (e.g. revolving fund) and also the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility. In addition, challenges emerged regarding their other roles:

- **Operation and maintenance of improved shearing sheds:** sustaining the operation and ensuring equitable access for all value chain players (specifically the poor farmers) remains a challenge.
- **Managing two sheep studs:** The LNWMGA indicated that the financial burden of paying rent to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition is compromising the sustainability of its operations; it also indicated constraints in ensuring equitable access for all interest groups.
- **Advocacy/policy development:** The wool and mohair sectors were affected in 2018, following a marketing regulation reform that caused changes to the export of wool and mohair and had a strong negative effect on the trust among its actors. Divergent opinions within the LNWMGA led to the birth of the *Skylight Wool and Mohair Association*, a new FO which is more inclusive, as it has no membership selection criteria (unlike the LNWMGA) and the aim is to partner with more brokers.
- **Co-financing:** The LNWMGA provided co-financing to the project, although majority was through in-kind contributions.

Lesson learned: The planned roles of the LNWMGA in WAMPP design, while building on some of its key strengths, were too broad-ranging and overly ambitious to deliver all intended outcomes.

Way forward. All value chain players (FOs, national and foreign brokers, traders, small and medium enterprises, government ministries) have agreed in principle to create a joint venture to form a Wool and Mohair Fund and Wool and Mohair Enterprise. It was also agreed that ownership will be expanded to rangeland management committees and other relevant players. The enterprise is envisaged to be the operational and executing arm of the wool and mohair sector, driving critical performance areas that contribute to a more inclusive, dynamic and profitable value chain.

The LNWMGA will play a critical role, although more limited, in terms of supporting implementation of the follow-up project Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project, as it will be a board member of the Wool and Mohair Fund and Mohair Enterprise Consortium. This new model will provide greater clarity as to the role of the LNWMGA, allowing it to focus on its strengths in terms of representing farmers and securing marketing channels for its members, and allowing for greater organic growth within the institution, where key issues around governance can be adequately reviewed and discussed.



**Section II: Regional process
of the FAFOs 2020–2023**

Section II: Regional process of the FAFOs 2020–2023

In alignment with IFAD’s decentralization process, the decentralization of the FAFOs in the regions started after the 2016 Global FAFO to enhance the participation of country FOs in IFAD processes, as well as to keep track of the partnership. The Global Farmers’ Forum is now organized on a four-year basis, with global meetings held every four years and regional FAFOs organized in between. During the 2020–2023 period, the second round of regional FAFOs was held, and for the first time it covered the NEN region. Regional FAFOs are undertaken based on IFAD’s geographical setup and the diverse nature of FOs and regions. For instance, in NEN and LAC, two separated regional FAFOs were organized based on the different realities of the subregions. When possible, the regional FAFOs were organized along with IFAD regional events, such as regional division implementation workshops, to facilitate interactions between FOs and IFAD country teams and project staff.

During this period, seven regional meetings were held between September 2022 and February 2023 as per the below table.

Table 4: Venue and participants of the seven regional/subregional FAFOs held in 2022–2023

	ESA	WCA	APR	LAC 1	LAC 2	NEN 1	NEN 2	Total
Date	24-25 November 2022	16-18 November 2022	26-29 October 2022	23-24 January 2023	26-27 January 2023	23 February 2023	17-18 October 2022	6
Location	Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)	Grand- Bassam (Ivory Coast)*	Bangkok (Thailand)	Panama City (Panama)	Montevideo (Uruguay)	Istanbul (Turkey)	Tunis (Tunisia)	
Number of farmer leaders from various FOs	33	46	40	25	43	22	50	234
Country represented	17	23	26	13	15	10	13	114
Number of other participants ²⁶	31	200	32	46	23	10	8	340
Total number of participants	64	246	72	71	66	32	58	609
country level action plans	17	23	0	0	0	0	0	40

*held in conjunction with the annual regional implementation workshop

In order to prepare the regional FAFO meetings, a lead organization in each region Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) for APR; Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) for ESA; the Confederación de Organizaciones de Productores Familiares del Mercosur Ampliado (COPROFAM)²⁷ for LAC; and ROPPA for WCA was mandated to set up a regional FAFO steering committee whose mission was to articulate a roadmap for the decentralized FAFO in its region. Regional steering committees were either formed (for the NEN FAFOs that were organized for the first time) or held sessions to plan for the events, in order to decide on the thematic content of the regional FAFO meetings, the logistical aspects (e.g. venue, budget) and on the list of participating FOs (number and names). The regional FAFO steering committees interacted with the IFAD regional division directors, front office, and IFAD regional FO focal points to discuss how to organize the event. Budgets were allocated by IFAD (using Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation resources dedicated to FAFO) for each steering committee through contribution grants that were managed by the lead FO of each steering committee. In the case of the WCA regional FAFO that was organized jointly with the WCA Regional Implementation Workshop, there were shared costs with WCA, and financial contribution of some WCA projects that sponsored additional

²⁶ including IFAD staff and projects’ staff

²⁷ Expanded MERCOSUR Confederation of Family Farmers’ Organisations

FO representatives' participation in order to have at least one FO representative per country of the WCA region.

Moreover, for the first time, a dedicated set of surveys was designed and submitted to IFAD country teams, PMUs and FOs prior the ESA, LAC and WCA events²⁸ in order to assess the partnership from various perspectives.²⁹ Virtual interviews were conducted ahead of the APR FAFO. The objective was to collect feedback from diverse stakeholders at country level on the types of collaboration with FOs, the key value added, and limits and perspectives, as well as to collect any innovations and interesting cases to document in the future.

For this round of regional FAFOs, the meetings were also the occasion to hold discussions at the regional level between the regional teams of IFAD and the participating regional FOs. Some priority topics were put on the table as high in the forthcoming agenda of the regional collaboration. These topics are presented in the regional sections below.

A. General results of the regional FAFOs

Participants of all regional meetings of the FAFO recognized the need to develop IFAD interventions through FOs. Moreover, collaboration between IFAD and FOs at different levels, based on the mandate attributed to each level of FOs, is considered fundamental for the success of IFAD interventions. Key messages are presented in the paragraphs that follow, based on the responses to the surveys submitted to participants.

FOs that participated in the survey were mostly related with an IFAD project, either as beneficiaries (52%) or implementers (36%).³⁰ When they participated in IFAD projects as implementers, most of them provided rural extension services to participating FOs (40.2%) and economic services (32.6%). In addition, most of the FOs mentioned that they did not participate in any COSOP design process (76%). However, the majority responded that they participated in new project design (64%), mostly through participation in multi-stakeholder consultations (38%) or design workshops (30%).

On the other hand, PMU coordinators from the projects designed or implemented in the respective regions (except for NEN, which did not undertake a survey) mentioned that most of them work with local FOs such as cooperatives (72%) and smallholder associations (70%), but also informal groups (55%). Nevertheless, 48 per cent of PMU coordinators also mentioned that they worked with apex FOs, mostly with general and commodity national associations (both with 47%), but women/youth organizations also show a significant partnership with PMUs (45%). Projects provide support to FOs mostly in capacity building but also in the development of economic activities.

Box 3: Involvement of apex FOs in IFAD projects

In a survey distributed to PMU staff, most of respondents mentioned some type of interaction with apex FOs. Most apex FOs participate in supervision and implementation. However, their roles differ significantly by region.

For instance, it was mentioned that apex FOs provided support to project developers for organizing fisherfolks and setting up cooperatives the Gwadar-Lasbela Livelihoods Support Project (GLLS) Project in Pakistan. Also, apex FOs helped the project to improve the linkages between FOs and service providers and traders in the Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (RERP) in Nepal, and with milk processors in the Commercial Agriculture and Resilient Livelihoods Enhancement Programme (CARLEP) in Bhutan.

Apex FOs are seen as key partners in WCA, especially for policy engagement, advocacy of IFAD activities, and knowledge management. Also, they have supported IFAD projects and facilitated access to local FOs. For instance, in Senegal, the Support to Agricultural Development and Rural Entrepreneurship Programme - Phase II (PADAER II) PMU worked together with apex FOs for the delivery of key production inputs in 2022 and 2023, and for the

²⁸ Only APR and NEN FAFOs did not benefit from a survey prior the events because of lack of time for APR (a survey to PMUs was taken in 2023 after the regional FAFO to feed into this PiP report) and because the regional FAFO was new in NEN.

²⁹ See Annex VI with the three questionnaires submitted for the survey.

³⁰ Based on the survey sent to FOs.

organizational and institutional support of local and regional apex FOs. Also, the national FO platform, Conseil national de concertation et de coopération des ruraux du Sénégal (CNCR) has been contracted by the PMU to put in place a farmer-led citizen feedback mechanism. In the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (SL-AVDP) in Sierra Leone, apex FOs were responsible for monitoring activities of local FOs and providing training to farmers. In the Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprises Project in the Niger Delta of Nigeria (LIFE-ND), apex FOs provided a grievance mechanism for local FOs and promoted the involvement of private sector extension agents in generating and disseminating improved technologies in agricultural value chains. They also promoted linkages with private firms downstream (input providers) and upstream (buyers), thus reducing the role of middlemen. In the Ghana Agricultural Sector Investment Programme (GASIP) and Emergency Support to Rural livelihoods and Food systems exposed to COVID 19 (ESRF) Project in Ghana, apex FOs provided support to formalization of local FOs.

According to PMU staff, there is not much involvement of apex FOs in project implementation. Most direct involvement of apex FOs is in COSOP design and policy engagement (at the national level) and on supervision and support missions (at the project level). However, some initiatives are worth noting. For instance, working with the Dominican Republic's Agribusiness Board (Junta Agroempresarial Dominicana) was key for the implementation of the Rural Economic Development Project in the Central and Eastern Provinces (Prorural Centro y Este) project. The Board was responsible for the design and monitoring of the business plans developed by local FOs.

An interesting case study is the evolving partnership with the Conseil National de Concertation des Producteurs Ruraux du Tchad (see details in the specific case study).

Regarding major barriers and limitations to partnership perceived by FOs and PMUs, different points of view can be found. On the one hand, FOs reported that the most significant limitation is the lack of coordination or lack of information about IFAD interventions. About 41 per cent of FOs that participated in the survey mentioned that their information about IFAD activities was very limited or that they did not have any relationship with IFAD. FOs also mentioned that delays in project implementation, usually due to long governmental procedures or delays in hiring personnel, was also a barrier to improving the partnership with IFAD. On the other hand, PMUs' major barrier for partnership is the lack of capacities of FOs, especially in terms of organization and formalization.

B. Specific results for regions

B.1 Asia and the Pacific

Major topics of discussion during the meetings were the current food crisis and climate change, which left billions of family farmers with limited access to fertilizers and exposed them to extreme weather conditions and events, such as droughts and floods. This situation considerably affected the food systems of the region. In this sense, family farmers are presented as solution providers. Despite their limited capacities and resources, FOs at local, national and regional levels have made efforts to respond holistically to the current situation.

Promoting the inclusion of FOs in national level processes of IFAD was considered necessary, including processes such as IFAD COSOP design, implementation, monitoring of its country portfolio projects and knowledge management work, facilitating FO–government interactions, and supporting capacities of FOs in policy engagement. Climate financing was also recognized, and it was stated that no project that damages the environment will be financed by IFAD. Instead, organic and GMO³¹-free production will be promoted. The importance of ICT4D³² was also discussed, and several examples of IFAD's digital innovation in agriculture for climate adaptation and resilience were presented.

³¹ genetically modified organism

³² Information and Communications Technology for Development

To meet FOs' needs, it was proposed that a regular direct financing window be set up for FOs to catalyse economic service delivery and value chain development, capacity building and policy engagement, directly provide funding to young entrepreneurs, and for disaster emergency recovery. The FOs further called for a more meaningful representation and participation in IFAD country processes, including through COSOPs, project implementation as well as policy engagement.

The priorities indicated for IFAD to address FOs' needs included (among others): involvement in design and planning for country programmes; economic development with climate resilience and adaptation to climate change for smallholders; facilitated access to finance, such as low-interest revolving funds for agribusiness; institutional strengthening; and policy work around key themes important for FOs and smallholder farmers.

It is important to note the increasing focus on FOs in IFAD country programmes in the region. For instance, the Indonesia COSOP (2023–2027) clearly indicates that, *“IFAD will prioritize supporting existing smallholder organizations – or supporting their creation where they do not yet exist – to enable them to become autonomous, sustainable, business-oriented and gender-balanced. Support will be provided to strengthen their productive and managerial skills, establish transparent governance systems and support their recognition as legal entities”*. The COSOP for India 2018–2024 lists producer organizations/cooperatives/companies, village organizations, and federations of self-help groups as part of programme's target group. In the Philippines, the country programme's strong knowledge management focus led to the creation of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Knowledge and Policy Platform, which was key to the FOs' participation in the drafting of the Philippine Action Plan for Family Farming and stocktaking toward food system transformation.

Assessment of country-level partnership in the region indicated some advanced level of partnership. For example, VNFU in Vietnam had a cooperation agreement with IFAD covering 2016–2020; and in Cambodia, FOs are engaged in project implementation – Farmer and Nature Net Association, Cambodian Farmer Federation Association of Agricultural Producers are involved in implementation of the Accelerating Inclusive Markets for Smallholders project. FOs, together with Chamber of Commerce, signed an institutional contract with the project, in which staff fill the position of hub facilitators and with additional responsibilities to link with existing FOs and the private sector.

Some projects, such as Economic Transformation Initiative - Gilgit Baltistan (ETIGB - PK) in Pakistan and Smallholder Agribusiness Partnerships Programme (SAPP) in Sri Lanka, have included FOs as part of the 4P³³ approach. Lessons indicate a need for strengthening FOs to play this role. In Pakistan, the project supports the establishment of village producer groups and valley producer organizations to act as aggregators of produce and agents for collective marketing of produce and procurement of inputs and services. However, to attain credibility and a professional business approach, these organizations need to be formalized and structured into legally recognized entities like cooperatives with professional management and sound business plans. This will enable them to engage with other sources of support, including finance, and be under an oversight that lends them credibility.

For the project in Sri Lanka, subcomponent 2.1 supports capacity building of producer/farmer organizations to become effective partners under 4P schemes, and to be able to take informed decisions about their business. A total of 70 FOs were expected to be supported under three models: (i) private-sector-led 4Ps with 20 FOs; (ii) mature FOs or farmer cooperatives (10) already managing sizable businesses; and (iii) incipient FOs (40), mainly under the Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka areas. At implementation, several challenges have emerged arising from the weak capacities of the FOs. Accordingly, the project support to incipient FOs is undertaken through their linkage with 4Ps (either private sector or established FOs).

As indicated in section III, FOs in the APR region implement several grants including the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) grants and the FO programmes. In addition, the FOs in the region are

³³ Public–private–producer Partnerships

strong promoters of social inclusion, as studied in the recent publication of IFAD/PMI rural institutions team. Initiatives on [Empowering rural youth through farmers' organizations \(ifad.org\)](https://www.ifad.org/en/empowering-rural-youth-through-farmers-organizations) in the region through FOs are published with key case study on IFAD–FO youth initiatives.

B.2 East and Southern Africa

The regional FAFO in ESA centered around building sustainable partnerships and collaboration through ESA's portfolio and explored opportunities presented by the new financing instruments and initiatives in IFAD (climate financing, private sector financing and ICT4D) to leverage resources to support smallholder farmers in transforming food systems. The post-2021 UN food systems actions were also discussed with a view to developing a common understanding of the implementation structure under the United Nations Food System Summit (UNFSS) global hub, and understanding the progress made by IFAD, FOs and development partners (represented by FAO) in implementing the actions leading to country-level UNFSS pathways. The 17 action plans agreed upon between FOs and IFAD include: (i) periodic consultations to monitor country-level collaboration and propose corrective measures to improve cooperation between IFAD- supported projects and FOs; (ii) supporting the development of regional and country-level farmers' or rural producers' forums to foster dialogue between regional governments, national government, FOs and development partners for sustainable rural development; (iii) joint mapping and profiling of FOs (regional, national and local) to explore ways of developing cooperation with IFAD programmes through the FOs; and (iv) building on good practices; and (v) exploring opportunities to formalize partnerships between IFAD-funded projects and FOs to support the institutional development of local FOs, thus contributing to their inclusion in IFAD-funded investment projects.

The regional FAFO was also the occasion to have strategic regional conversations that led to the following recommendations: (i) review the gaps and areas of improvement in the IFAD programmes and partnerships with FOs; (ii) establish partnership with IFAD's private sector unit to determine ways that the private sector window will be suitable for FO engagement; (iii) jointly work on a long-term fund-raising plan for regional and continental organizations since they are not part of the country portfolio; and (iv) explore ways to facilitate and enhance engagement of FAFO FOs and their members in IFAD- financed programmes for subsectors such as livestock, fisheries, organics, agroecology and other important food systems sectors currently in the global agenda.

It is worth noting that IFAD produced the study [*Engagement with smallholder farmers' organizations in IFAD operations: Impacts and lessons learned from the East and Southern Africa Region.*](#)

Box 4: Supporting FO structuring and access to markets: the experience of the Kenya Cereal Enhancement Programme Climate Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods Window

Implemented in 2015–2024, the Kenya Cereal Enhancement Programme Climate Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods Window aims to reduce rural poverty and food insecurity among 100,000 smallholder farmers whose livelihoods depend on maize, sorghum, millet and associated pulses in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands.

The project supports the graduation of smallholder farmers to commercially oriented, climate-resilient agricultural practices through improvements in productivity, post-production management practices and market linkages for targeted value chains. Further, it empowers county governments and communities to sustainably manage natural resources and build resilience to climate change.

With total funding of US\$123.1 million, the project approach is based on a strategic partnership between the European Union and the three Rome-based agencies.

The project collaborates with farmers' associations, farmers' groups, marketing committees, self-help or community-based organizations, farmer cooperatives and agrodealers' associations. It has successfully mobilized and organized farmers and provided support and capacity building on organizational management and leadership.

As of 2022, 250 cereal farmer associations had been established and linked to structured grain trading, including selling to the Strategic Food Reserve through the National Cereals and Produce Board. The cereal farmer associations established are linked to a structured grain trading system, comprising 250 collection centres and 137 certified warehouses with warehouse receipt system services in place.

The project has also made good progress in linking smallholder farmers and groups to an e-voucher platform (the Grain Trade Business Hub). Through the electronic payment platform, farmers can access climate-resilient agricultural inputs and farming technologies to enhance their productivity. Access is further linked to financial literacy and banking services. Thanks to the support received, FOs have realized substantial increases in productivity, e.g. reaching 50 per cent for maize.

B.3 Latin America and the Caribbean

FOs remain a strong vehicle to drive IFAD's agenda of targeted and inclusive rural development that embraces different categories of the rural poor, including family farmers, artisanal fishers, indigenous peoples, women and youth. While this is more evident at the grass-roots level where most of IFAD loan-funded projects directly support FOs, there is room for improvement with respect to involving the national and apex FO organizations in operations and in policy engagement. It is important to bear in mind the distinction between grass-roots FOs and apex (or second tier) FOs and the different roles these could play in the country programmes. The nature of their governance and membership rules reflects the different mandates and the type of services offered, more technically focused on the field level and more centered on policy dialogue, advocacy, knowledge management and partnerships at the national and regional levels. At the intermediate territorial level (district, province, subregion), apex FOs can be the engine for integration of local FOs in value chain dynamics.

The main topics identified during the Forum were:

- Fighting poverty: requires production of food and strengthening of food security
- Agroecology: promote the transition to sustainable production systems
- Access to appropriate markets for family farming: public sector procurement, local markets
- Climate change and climate crisis: mitigate effects of climate change and strengthen emergency response
- Capacity building of producer organizations: especially women and youth
- Access to and use of ICTs: equipment, capacity building and connectivity; digitalization of FOs' processes and access to digital platforms; involvement of youth.

Box 5: Support to family farming: Peruvian FOs involved in the public procurement of food of family farming origin through IFAD investment projects

Context. In 2020, the Peruvian Government approved Law 31071 and its regulations on public procurement of food of family farming, which establishes the mandate for the Government to acquire up to 10 per cent of its total annual food needs from family farming. The percentage would increase to 20 per cent in 2023 and at least 30 per cent in 2024. It is expected that 2.2 million family farmers will benefit from the Law. Benefits include improved economic and social development, strengthened associativity, and enhanced opportunities for training and technical assistance.

Supporting FOs to obtain certification. IFAD, FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) provided specialized support to the Government for the application of the Law. The articulated effort of different entities of the Government of Peru and the technical assistance of the three UN agencies were key to deliver the first certifications for the use of the brand "Family Farming of Peru" to 37 FOs in 2022, for the benefit of more than 3,500 agricultural producers. The certification is a fundamental requirement for FOs to access the market related to public procurement and become potential food suppliers within public social programmes and public entities.

Thirteen organizations engaged in the implementation of the IFAD-funded Sustainable Territorial Development Project (PDTs) were among the FOs receiving the first certifications. Implemented in 2016–2022, PDTs aimed to contribute to reducing poverty among 50,000 poor rural families through social and productive inclusion. The main areas of intervention of the project included sustainable natural resource management and development, and the facilitation of market access through improved infrastructure. Further, PDTs supported the creation, development and consolidation of organizations of smallholder farmers, oriented towards improving their livelihood strategies and achieving greater and better participation in markets for goods and services.

IFAD’s contribution to the implementation of the Law through research. IFAD further conducted a study on food supply and demand and institutions to promote the implementation of the Law on state purchases of food of family farming origin in Ayacucho. The study revealed a prevalence of the potato milk, quinoa, guinea pigs, avocado and trout value chains in the area. Further it indicated that 90 per cent of FOs operating in Ayacucho are associations. These organizations may thus find an opportunity to improve and reinforce their engagement in markets by becoming suppliers for the state.

Looking ahead. According to Ministry of Agriculture, state purchases from family farming at the national level, through social programmes and public entities, will have a value of more than PEN 650 million (approximately US\$180.8 million) by 2024 and will benefit more than 150,000 agricultural producers.

B.4 West and Central Africa

The WCA regional FAFO was the only one to be organized jointly with the WCA Regional Implementation Workshop, therefore leveraging on the three-day interactions between FOs (regional and national), IFAD country and regional teams, IFAD PMU staff and Government officials’ representatives. During the forum, it was recognized that, for the first time, a funding institution had decided to have a direct dialogue with the beneficiaries for whom it was created. Also, it was mentioned that the added value of the regional FAFO is to bring the discussion on the FO–IFAD country partnership and IFAD-funded operations closer together.

The main topic of the 2022 WCA regional FAFO was *“Improving the quality and performance of IFAD-funded projects in the context of multiple crises”* and was seen as an opportunity for policymakers and development practitioners, and especially for producers and FOs, to better strengthen national partnerships between FOs and IFAD programmes in the region. It also enabled stakeholders to draw lessons from IFAD-supported projects and to reach agreement on the approach to improve results for the benefit of rural populations.

Important technical topics related to the IFAD–FO partnership were discussed:

- **Youth:** Economic integration of young people in agro-silvo-pastoral and fisheries sectors – What role for FOs? Which funding mechanisms/instruments?
- **Economic infrastructure:** Ownership of market infrastructures and equipment co-financed by FOs in public projects in support of value chain development
- **Climate:** Green Climate Fund and other climate change adaptation funds – how to promote an effective partnership with FOs?
- **Family Farming:** Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDF) constraints and opportunities.

Seven priority topics of regional interest were discussed between IFAD regional teams and the representatives of regional FOs during the forum:

1. **Agroecology:** Promotion of support for the agroecological transition of agroforestry and fisheries communities and production systems in West Africa
2. **Rice:** Promotion of farmers’ economic models of “service cooperatives” to strengthen youth self-employment and women’s empowerment in the rice value chain in West Africa

3. **Observatory of Family Farming:** Observatory of family farms, a tool for producing information, data and knowledge on family farms; monitoring the content and governance of public investment policies/programmes in West Africa
4. **Promotion of technologies and farmer innovations:** FOs–research collaboration, valorization of endogenous knowledge
5. **Integration of young people in agriculture:** Replicating best practices within youth projects (e.g. from the Youth Agropastoral Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme - PEA Jeune in Cameroon)
6. **Pastoralism and role of FOs in insecure areas**
7. **Promotion of local milk:** Less equipment for the development of dairy processing units.

Box 6: Examples of concrete outcomes of the working sessions in the WCA regional FAFO

As the 2024 Global FAFO is being prepared, the WCA region can already report on several actions that were taken as a follow-up to recommendations from the FAFO:

The Workshop entitled Information, partnership and advocacy in the framework of the IGREENFIN Programme was held in January 2023 with the objectives to: (i) to share with FOs more details on the implementation modalities of the IGREENFIN in the six targeted countries; and (ii) make concrete proposals on the roles and responsibilities of the national farmers' platform members of ROPPA in the implementation of IGREENFIN.

WCA, in partnership with PMI, has entered two regional grants to FOs into the pipeline: (i) one on pastoralism “Water for peace” in partnership with Réseau Billital Maroobe (RBM) ; and (ii) one on the rice value chain and local rice promotion/ branding and policy dialogue, in partnership with the Rice consultation framework of ROPPA.

As a result of the country-level conversations between IFAD country teams, FOs, PMUs and government representatives, the 2018 Nouakchott regional FAFO action plans were assessed, and 23 new action plans agreed between the parties.³⁴

The major challenges/constraints in IFAD–FO collaboration in WCA are: (i) IFAD’s institutional weaknesses related to the lack of adequate resources and/or the complexity/non-adaptation of procedures; (ii) the fragility, capacity challenges, structuring and/or own resources of FOs; and (iii) the professionalization of actors and the financial autonomy of FOs.

To improve the FO–IFAD partnership, the following recommendations are urged: (i) strengthen institutional relations between IFAD and FOs; (ii) promote cooperation and synergies between FOs, IFAD and other partners; (iii) prioritize training, structuring and professionalization of FOs; and (iv) set up specific permanent funds to support FOs.

Box 7: FOs’ participation as manager of a component – the North Kivu Agriculture Sector Support Project

Launched in 2018, the North Kivu Agriculture Sector Support Project (PASA-NK) aims to enable 28,400 smallholder farmer households in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to gain sustainable access to inputs and markets, improve remuneration from agricultural products, and increase the stability of apex producers’ organizations. The project is implemented in the province of North Kivu (territories of Beni, Lubero, Masisi, Nyiragongo and Rutshuru) and covers the production and commercialization of four important crops: maize, rice, potato and Arabica coffee. PASA-NK activities focus on two key areas of support: (i) strengthening FOs and building their capacities to provide economic services to farmers in order to improve their access to agricultural inputs and markets and thus boost agricultural productivity and incomes; (ii) supporting rural infrastructure, particularly with the rehabilitation of agricultural access roads.

³⁴ See key areas of these action plans in Annex VII.

PASA-NK is an innovative project in which FOs play a prominent role. The project is implemented by “lead FOs” (one for each of the targeted food crop value chains) selected following an institutional profiling that was carried out during project design, based on their leadership in the value chain development and their overall capacities. Lead FOs oversee the identification, mobilization and delivery of services to project beneficiaries. Services include access to improved seeds and fertilizers, the provision of advisory services, storage and warehousing, and access to markets. A manual of procedures was created specifically dedicated to FOs’ management of project activities.

The implementation of PASA-NK enables important lessons to be learned in relation to the support to FOs. In particular, building on existing dynamics, FO structures and services ensures better ownership and sustainability of project interventions. Nonetheless, continuous capacity building of FOs is needed. Assistance by PMUs is key in this regard, particularly for the provision of implementation support to FOs on fiduciary aspects.

B.5 Near East and North Africa and Europe

During the first regional meeting³⁵ of the FAFO held in NEN, the importance of national and regional FOs as key IFAD and government counterparts was recognized. However, it is necessary to invest in capacity building and FO governance. Also, it is important to map the relevant FOs to facilitate the interaction and the consultations for COSOP and project design, as well as for knowledge generation, management and dissemination of current experiences and collaborations. One important aspect of the NEN regional FAFO in the MENA subregion was the peer-to-peer support provided by ROPPA from WCA to share its regional FAFO experience, and also to reflect together after the event on joint suggestions to be presented at the 2024 Global FAFO.

Priority topics identified in the region are:

- Transition to sustainable agricultural production
- Support to vulnerable groups, such as women and youth
- Promoting the formalization and governance of small-scale rural producers’ organizations and FOs
- Supporting the mobilization of resources for direct support to FOs in order to develop direct programmes with FOs and implement more activities with IFAD
- Raising the capacities of FOs at the technical and financial levels to ensure stronger institutional and organizational structures
- Reinforcing tripartite partnerships (IFAD–FOs–Government).

It was agreed to reinforce the knowledge among FOs to generate a sense of community and to build the basic pillars for organized small-scale farmers. Also, there was a commitment to improve FO governance and capacities at regional and national levels, as well as to promote an FO dialogue platform and capacity building and a farmer-to-farmer learning process.

³⁵ The regional FAFO in NEN was organized through two subregional meetings: one for Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and one for Europe and Central Asia (ECA).

Case study

Promoting local development through grass-roots FOs in Tunisia – the experience of the Agropastoral Development and Local Initiatives Promotion Programme for the South-East - Phase II

The project. Implemented in 2012–2020 and building upon the achievements of a previous phase, the [Agropastoral Development and Local Initiatives Promotion Programme for the South-East - Phase II](#) (PRODESUD), Tunisia aimed to contribute to improved living conditions and rural poverty reduction for more than 13,000 households engaged in small-scale crop and livestock farming. PRODESUD focused its intervention in a geographic area comprising the Governorate of Tataouine and the ancient delegation of Douz in the Governorate of Kébili. To achieve its objectives, PRODESUD was built around three main components: (i) agropastoral development, with a focus on increasing rangeland productivity, improving agricultural production, and reinforcing basic, pastoral and protection infrastructure; (ii) the promotion of local economic initiatives with a focus on disadvantaged groups; and (iii) institutional support for the grass-roots organizations of beneficiaries to help them take charge of their own development.

Involvement of FOs. The project focused its intervention on supporting Agricultural Development Groups (ADGs) and Mutual Societies of Agricultural Services (MSAS). Of recent creation, ADGs are membership-based grass-roots organizations which focus their interventions on the participatory management of natural resources (water, forests, irrigated perimeters, rangelands). MSAS provide agricultural inputs and services to their members and market agricultural products. While ADGs and MSAS are still fragile structures with limited financial resources to fulfill their mandates, they play a key role in the mobilization of rural actors and have the potential to become relevant players in local development.

PRODESUD support. PRODESUD-II involved ADGs and MSAS in the mobilization of beneficiaries and in planning and implementing agropastoral activities. It also made significant efforts to strengthen their institutional, technical and financial capacities and equip them with the needed resources. In particular, the following activities were undertaken:

- The development of business plans for 4 ADGs and training of 171 board members of ADGs and MSAS
- The creation of a revolving fund in Douz thanks to the profits drawn from the sale of 4,170 tons of subsidized barley to two ADGs benefiting 2,800-member breeders
- The establishment of 5 warehouses and the construction and/or equipment of premises for the benefit of 8 ADGs and 18 MSAS.

As a result of project activities, 70 per cent of reinforced grass-roots organizations were functional and partially able to fulfill their mandates at project completion. The remarkable development of certain organizations such as the MSAS of Kirchaoui or the ADGs of El Marai in Douz represent evidence of their improved technical and financial management capacities.

The support to ADGs and MSAS not only was an asset for the involvement of 85,415 beneficiaries in the project but was a key factor enabling PRODESUD to improve agropastoral development. Key results achieved by the project include:

- ***Improved rangeland, rainfed and irrigated production systems management and productivity***, which led to a 15 per cent increase in livestock productivity and a 20 per cent increase in yields for olive trees. Further, improved rangeland productivity resulted in an increase in herders' income by TND 416 per year and per capita (approximately US\$135).

- *The development of basic and protective infrastructure* with the construction of tracks, electric lines, road protection wind-breaks, and the extension of four water supply schemes.
- *The development of 282 income-generating activities and support to 39 small and medium enterprises*, contributing to reduce unemployment with the creation of 386 jobs which generate income in the range of TND 300 to 1,300 per month and per person (approximately US\$97.5–US\$423).

Lessons learned. The involvement of ADGs and MSAS in the project promoted local development and the effective involvement of rural actors in the sustainable management of natural resources. The organization of women in ADGs (9 in Tataouine, 1 in Douz) and MSAs and their regular participation in local development councils also represents a significant advancement for women in a conservative rural environment. This participatory approach was also relevant in relation to the process of decentralization that the country is undertaking. Although close support over the long term is needed to further strengthen ADGs and MSAS, their engagement in PRODESUD represented one of the main factors of ownership and sustainability of promoted interventions.

Cascade Coffee Farmers Group.
Formed in 2018 by experienced
farmers, dedicated to their
Community.



100% BLUE MOUNTAIN
TASTE THE DIFFERENCE

CASCADE COFFEE



SUPPORT JAMAICAN FARMERS

**Section III: IFAD's grants to FOs
from 2020 to 2023**

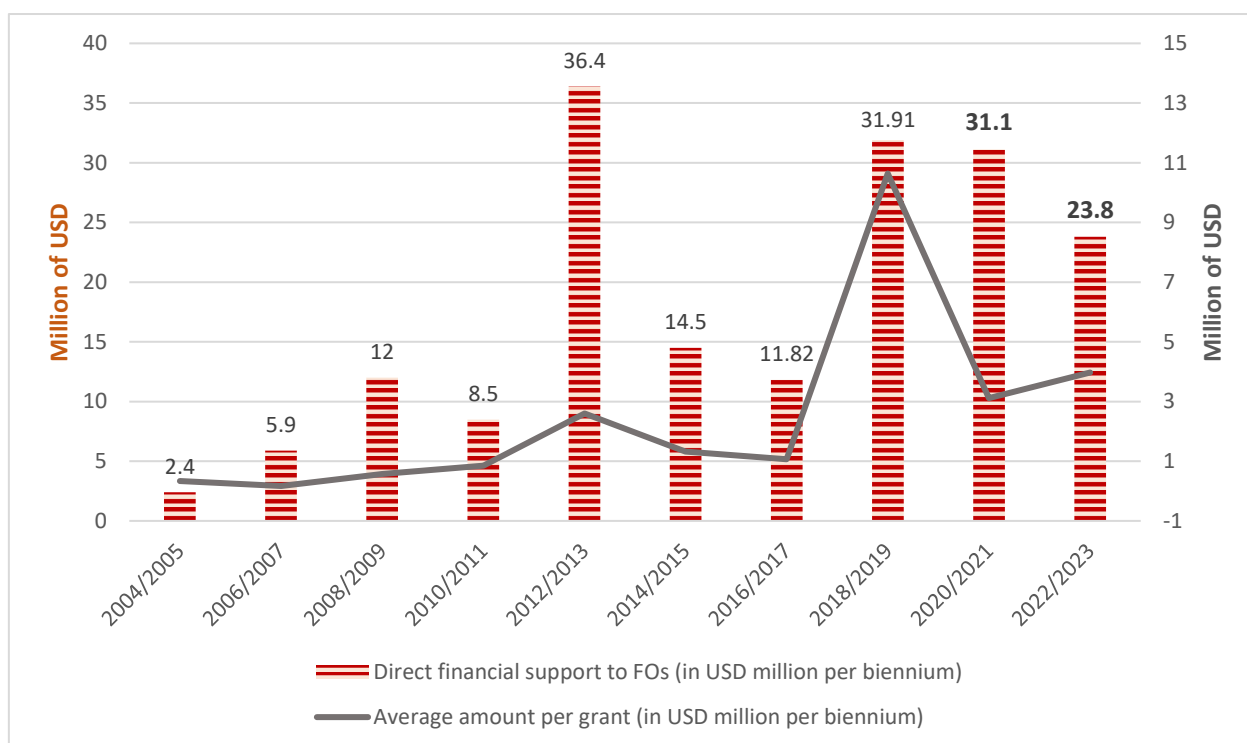
Section III: IFAD’s grants to FOs from 2020 to 2023

A. Overview of grant distribution and allocation

During the two bienniums under review, 16 grants to FOs were approved for a total amount of **US\$54.91 million** (10 grants for US\$31.1 million in 2020–2021 and 6 grants in 2022–2023 for US\$23.8 million). This amount for the period is the highest since the beginning of the FAFO in 2004. Data shows that the average amount per grant dropped during the last two bienniums.

The comprehensive list of grants approved in 2020–2023³⁶ shows that most grants were directly allocated to the FOs (**70% of the total envelope**), except for eight grants implemented by AgriCord³⁷ (US\$12.2 million) and FAO (US\$4.2 million) but nonetheless in direct support of national and local FOs.

Figure 18: Evolution of the grants to FOs (2004-2023)

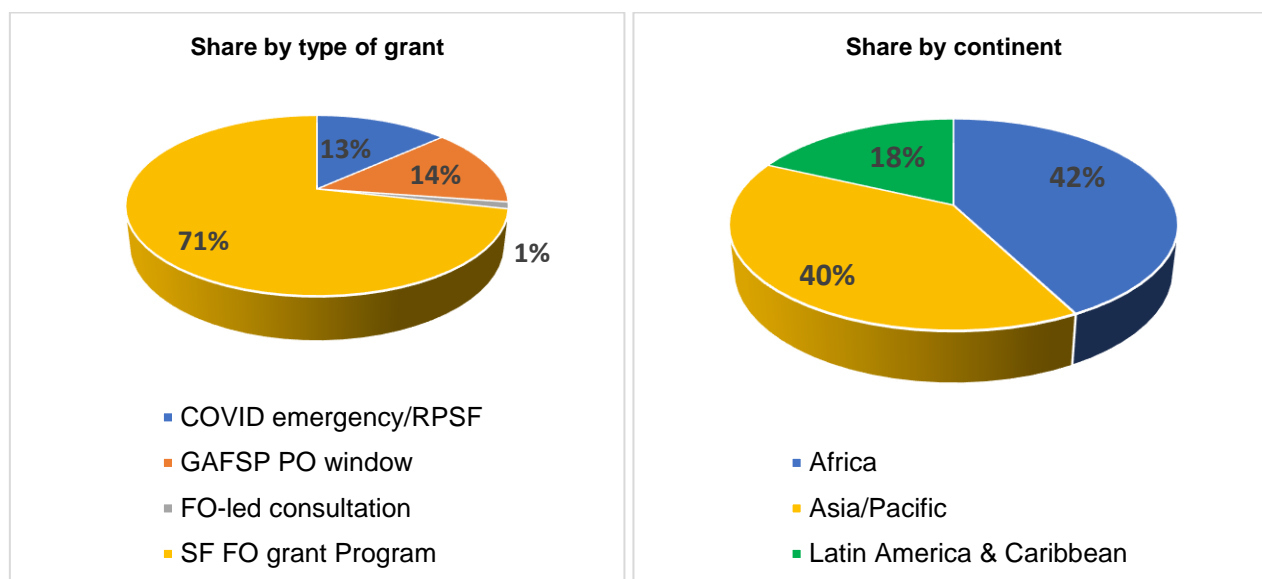


The European Union-IFAD co-funded “Farmers’ Organizations for” (FO4) programmes remain the most important modality for direct engagement with FOs under the period. Now all coming under a common brand of “FO4 Programmes” across the globe, they have become the most important non-debt funding mechanism to FOs. They disbursed US\$39.2 million to FOs around the world and corresponds to 71 per cent of the total amount granted. Although the share has decreased with respect to the previous period, they are still considered the main strategic instrument for the provision of direct support to FOs.

³⁶ See Annex VIII for the full list of grants approved during 2020–2023.

³⁷ AgriCord is a global alliance of agri-agencies mandated by FOs and their cooperative businesses from countries in Africa, Asia, Canada, the European Union and Latin America.

Figure 19: Approved Grants to FOs in 2020-2023



The Global Agriculture & Food Security Program (GAFSP) Producers' Organizations (PO) window is the second largest source of funding, which allocated US\$7.65 million to five projects led by FOs in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Mali and Senegal. Furthermore, in the two past bienniums, the RPSF – a new IFAD source of funding initiated under the emergency context of COVID-19 – disbursed US\$7.35 million to FOs in APR, ESA, NEN and WCA regions. Finally, US\$0.66 million was disbursed for FO-led consultation processes through regional FAFO events and the UNFSS consultations.

Africa and Asia Pacific are the major recipients of grants. In 2020–2023, FOs in Africa received US\$23.2 million (42% of the total) and FOs in Asia Pacific US\$21.7 million (40% of the total). For Africa, US\$4.4 million was invested to FOs of the continent, while US\$7.5 million was allocated only to ESA, US\$11.2 million to WCA and US\$142.381 for NEN. FOs of APR, the second largest recipient, benefited with US\$21.7 million, whereas LAC received US\$9.9 million.³⁸

B. Overview and key outcomes of the major grant windows financing FOs

This section will focus on the four major sources of funding for the period 2020–2023: FO4 programmes; GASFP; RPSF; and FO-led consultation³⁹.

B.1 FO4 programmes

FO4 programmes' theory of change is based on an integrated and complementary approach of its components and is founded on the principles of ownership, long-term sustainability and subsidiarity. The FO4 are capacity-building programmes that, by enhancing capacity at the FO level and the quality of governance (component 3), enable national and regional FOs to be recognized as key actors in policymaking processes. In this way, FOs can intervene in policy processes and debates and raise the voice of smallholders (component 2) to create a conducive policy environment for sustainable and profitable activities. FOs that are strengthened in terms of institution, governance and capacity are able to fulfil their mandate by supporting their members in terms of policy engagement and providing economic services for integration into relevant value chains, and for access to markets, resources and financing (component 1).

These FO4 programs are in alignment with FO partners' strategic priorities and putting them in the driving seat of implementation to ensure projects' relevance, impact and sustainability.

³⁸ It should be noted that the most relevant regional programme in terms of budget allocation, FO4ACP, was approved in 2019 and therefore included in the previous reporting period covered by the 2016 - 2019 PiP. FO4ACP is currently in the implementation phase. In the current reporting period 2020-2023, only the additional funding received in 2021 is included as "new approved grant".

³⁹ To note that both Regional FAFO and UNFSS consultations were financed through contribution grants- to regional FOs

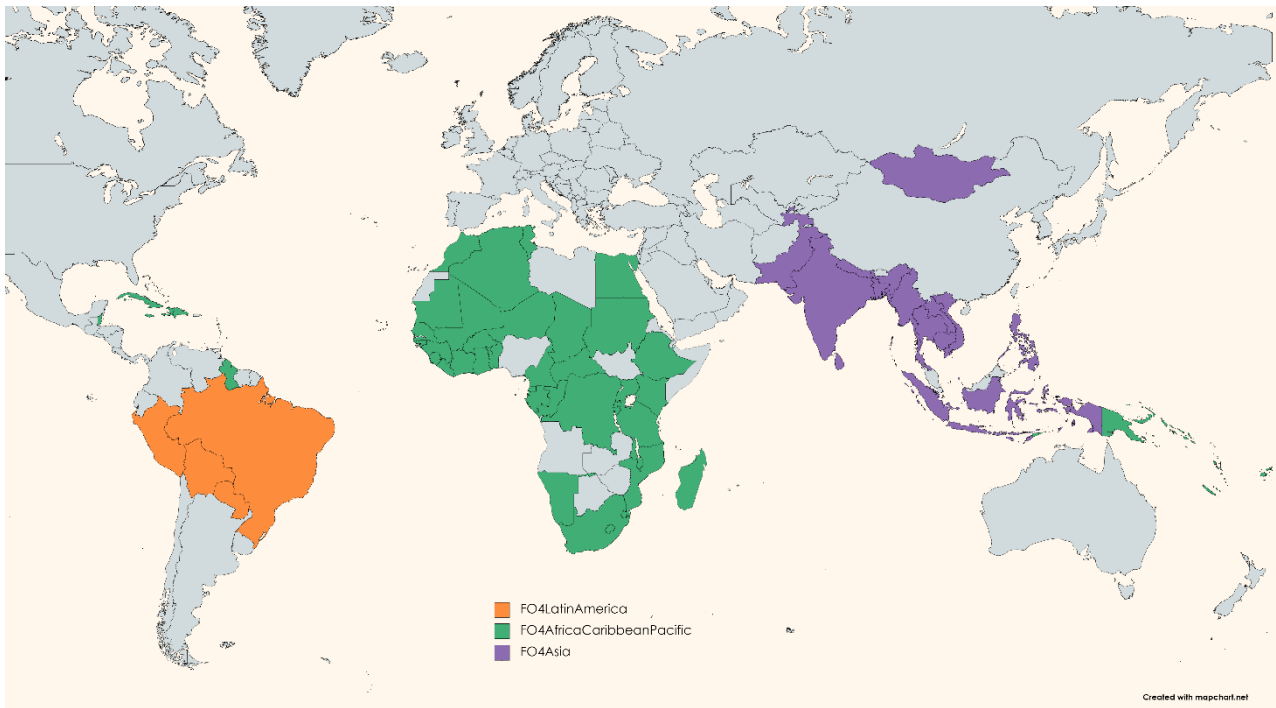


Figure 20: FO4Programmes in the world

Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (FO4ACP)⁴⁰

The FO4ACP programme aims to increase the incomes and improve the livelihoods, food and nutrition security and safety of organized smallholders and family farmers in ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) countries by strengthening regional, national and local FOs. The programme is implemented by six regional FOs, Pan African Farmers' Organization (PAFO), AgriCord and the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in collaboration with Procasur. The plan of work is defined in collaboration with the national FO members and the agri-agencies and implementing partners in about 70 countries, with a potential outreach of over 52 million smallholder farmers. Emphasis is placed on economic services, advocacy and institutional development of the membership-based FOs. The programme started in 2019 and was initially planned to run until the end of 2023. It has been extended until 2025 in great part due to additional European Union financing formalized in 2021. The programme includes the following five components:

Component 1: Delivery of economic services along priority value chains. This component supports FOs to improve their capacity to provide economic and technical services to their female and male members in order to support their business ambitions and ensure their profitable engagement in markets and integration into value chains based on the social and environmental sustainability and resilience of the method of production and transformation. This component enables FOs to strategically position themselves as service organizations for members and other stakeholders playing key functions along selected value chains.

Component 2: Enabling the business environment. This component helps to draw the attention of sector stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, governments and donors, to smallholder needs, especially in areas that are key to ensuring a conducive business environment for women and men smallholder farmers. These include support to agriculture policies that favour smallholder farming, creation of new green jobs, issues surrounding land tenure, and agricultural credit and trade policies.

Component 3: Institutional development of FOs. This component develops capacity-building activities that contribute to structuring organizations by setting up major building blocks required for their institutional development (e.g. strategies, tools, monitoring and evaluation).

⁴⁰ Source: FO4ACP mid-term review report.

Component 4: Communication and visibility. Under component 4, resources will be allocated for activities related to the communication and visibility of FO4ACP to improve the overall programme communication of positive results of the partnership and the impact of the action's results.

Component 5: IFAD programme coordination and monitoring and evaluation. IFAD ensures the overall coordination and day-to-day management of the programme, including supervision, implementation support, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management.

The programme focuses on six cross-cutting topics: gender; youth; environmental sustainability and climate change; nutrition; knowledge management; and ICT4D and Digitalization.

The FO4ACP is the result of joint efforts and consultations among all stakeholders and is built on the results achieved through the previous programmes supporting FOs (such as the Support to Farmers' Organizations in Africa Programme - SFOAP), on the analysis of the most challenging factors highlighted during implementation, and on the related lessons learned. IFAD was selected by FOs to coordinate and supervise FO4ACP because of its unique expertise and extensive partnerships and dialogue with FOs. At mid-term review (April 2022), the Programme had already reached 69 NFOs out of 83 initially targeted in 51 countries through six regional FOs : EAFF, Plateforme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale⁴¹ (PROPAC), ROPPA⁴², Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs⁴³ (UMNAGRI), PAFO and Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON), AgriCord and FAO in the Caribbean. FO4ACP has improved service delivery to FO members through trainings, linkages to markets, knowledge management and skills transfer, and strengthening policy engagement.⁴⁴

Some of the key lessons learned by component are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Key lessons learned from the mid-term review of FO4ACP⁴⁵

Thematic area	Key lessons
Economic Activities (C1)	Innovation in economic activities such as efficient equipment, norms and quality standards for new quality products, online marketing are attractive to youth. Farmers can be a powerful influence over service providers, reinforcing their feeling of belonging to their FOs. Face-to-face interaction remains critical in facilitating technology adoption.
Institutional Development (C2)	The programme is a vehicle to increase FOs' maturity, but continuous support to strengthen their institutional capacities is required to greatly improve the prospects for sustainability. Governing bodies of FOs need to meet regularly to improve FOs' accountability, governance and membership. The decentralized approach to activity planning and implementation, and the deployment of the bulk of resources at national FO level, are highly appropriate.
Policy Dialogue (C3)	Building alliances and partnerships with other organizations of civil society is key to build stronger policy dialogue and advocacy. There is a need to build capacities to undertake policy analysis and prepare policy briefs to fully engage with higher-level policy processes.
Knowledge Management, Communication and Visibility (C4)	Regular communication activities through social networks improve visibility to partners, members and the broader public. Sharing good practices, and capitalization of experiences between FOs within their networks and with agri-agencies are critical to ensure programme coordination and scaling up of successes.

⁴¹ Regional Platform of Farmers' Organizations in Central Africa

⁴² Network of Farmers' and Producers' Organizations in West Africa.

⁴³ Maghreb Union of Farmers

⁴⁴ Taken from Stocktaking exercise IFAD-FOs engagement. Learning from 15 years of partnership, 2023.

⁴⁵ Taken from Stocktaking exercise IFAD-FOs engagement. Learning from 15 years of partnership, 2023.

Coordination Mechanisms	Enhancing collective learning and mutual expertise is critical to improve FOs' capacities in delivering economic services and policy dialogue.
Performance-based Allocation of Funds	Using a performance tracking system with national FOs facilitates monitoring and financial reporting. FOs that are mainly volunteer-based with limited staffing have generally encountered the greatest difficulties in reporting and monitoring.
FOs' Capacities to Mobilize Funds	The sustainability of the organization and its activities is to be understood by the capacity of the organization to influence and mobilize external and internal funding. FO's internal funding can be generated by providing services to their members, from trading activities or income-generating activities.

Several good practices from FO4ACP are presented in box below.

Box 8: Good practices from FO4ACP component 1 in sub-Saharan Africa

Investing in FOs' institutional strengthening and professionalization (leadership, transparency and accountability) is the foundation for any successful and sustainable FO economic activity. Support to the good governance of FOs in the programme remains key to set foundations for economic activities. Through the audits, general assemblies, board meetings and other appropriate mechanisms to ensure full transparency, FOs can build the trust of their members as well as other external partners. For example, the FO Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Paysans (SYDIP) in DRC emphasized that their ability to regularly organize general assemblies strengthened the trust of their members, their willingness to pay financial contributions, and their trust in technical and political guidance from their organization.

Stand-alone activities will not result in a significant impact: local economic activities need to be implemented in a broader framework where national FOs can ensure policy influence, support along the value chain, market access and involvement in multi-stakeholder platforms. The Business to Business (B2B) meetings and platforms at the national and regional levels contribute significantly to the growth of the FOs, cooperatives and small and medium enterprises. For example, Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE) in Uganda introduced the B2B approach and assisted the district farmers associations to achieve quality standards, increase their prices and link them with other actors for the signature of contracts. Contracts were signed with the World Bank-funded project Agriculture Cluster Development Project implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries. The activities will be implemented by three UNFFE district farmers' associations. The project offers them investment in storage and processing facilities that will further strengthen the work undertaken along the cassava value chain. Lesotho National Farmers Union (LENAFU), a national FO in Lesotho, contributed to the development of the Marakeny E-commerce Enterprise Application, an online business platform created to facilitate agricultural business in Lesotho through the use of mobile money. In Burundi, Confédération des associations des producteurs agricoles pour le développement (CAPAD), supported by the agri-agency Collectif Stratégies Alimentaires (CSA, member of AgriCord), in collaboration with other players, has created a banana commodity platform. This multi-stakeholder platform provides a collaborative system for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of value chains in the banana sector and its subsectors, as well as the processed products and by-products (banana peelings and cakes), for the benefit of stakeholders in the farming systems, processing cycles and distribution channels, in compliance with health and environmental standards.

Promoting a business and market-driven management through well-developed and implemented business plans are key for the development of profitable FOs/cooperatives/small and medium enterprises. For example, national FOs such as CAPAD in Burundi have supported their member cooperatives (164) to develop business plans with a tool they developed, as part of their overall development plans, that include the

institutional strengthening of the cooperatives, alignment with the national laws for cooperatives, collective marketing, and joint positioning for advocacy and policy engagement.

Traditional economic services delivered by FOs such as collective purchasing of inputs and selling of produce, as well as support in contractual relationships with other value chain actors, are important pillars of the economic activities. For example, Coopérative Centrale Du Nord Kivu (COOCENKI) in DRC ensures the off-take of the production of their cooperatives through contracts with WFP, through their Purchase4Progress programme. Ingabo Syndicate ensures offtake of the cassava production of their members through contracts with the Kinazi Cassava Plant, which transforms cassava. In Cameroun, the Concertation Nationale des Organisations Paysannes au Cameroun ensures collective purchasing of inputs for their member cooperatives. Also, in DRC, the Confédération Paysanne du Congo (COPACO) worked on collective marketing of produce of their local FOs, strengthening their negotiating capacities, reducing transportation costs, and improving the marketing of the products through improved packaging.

When access to finance remains challenging, FOs can come up with innovative solutions to support their members. For example, the Tanzanian Federation of Cooperatives supported their members to evolve from Savings and Credit Co-operatives to agricultural marketing cooperative societies. Ingabo Syndicate in Rwanda worked on a financial product specifically adapted for cassava farmers called “Zamuka” through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cooperative of Progress and Financing. COOCENKI in the East of DRC provides access to finance for their members through village savings associations. SYDIP in DRC acted as an intermediary to gain credit from a financial institution, which it then provided to their members. In Eswatini, the Eswatini National Agricultural Union (ESNAU) established a digital savings platform in collaboration with Eswatini MTN (a mobile money platform), where farmers can save money for purchasing inputs. In 2021, 587 farmers saved up to. EUR 94,688 (around US\$103.000).

FOs are key in helping their members in the agroecological transition towards more resilient production practices. Agroecology offers solutions to the challenges that smallholder farmers face, particularly the difficulties in accessing sufficient and affordable inputs in a timely manner, aggravated by recent crises, and in light of the increasing impacts of climate change. For example, in Burkina Faso the introduction of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) techniques by the *Union provinciale des producteurs de Riz du Sanmatenga* enabled farmers to increase their production by 6 tons per hectare. The *Centre d'expérimentation et de formation sur fruits et légumes* in Madagascar worked on the certification of the seeds as well as the introduction of agroecological practices. Recognized for its strong training capacities on agroecology the Centre was invited to national processes and workshops to provide technical guidance. In Tanzania, the Agricultural Council of Tanzania (ACT) also recorded significant successes applying SRI. Farmers who adopted the SRI method witnessed an exponential increase in their rice yield. Where the majority once averaged 8 to 12 bags per acre, many tripled their yield after one season, while others, especially those whose farms are upstream, reached an optimum yield of 45 bags per acre. These bumper harvests have increased incomes by more than 50 per cent and enhanced standards of living. Farmers are now food-secure, and many have been able to build decent homes and diversify their livelihoods to include ventures like chicken farming, fish farming, cattle keeping, commercial seed multiplication, and other businesses.

[Farmers' Organizations for Asia \(FO4A\)](#), [Farmers' Organizations for Latin America \(FO4LA\)](#), and [Asian Pacific Farmers' Programme \(APFP\)](#)

The FO4A and FO4LA programmes, both financed by the European Union and supervised by IFAD, are capacity-building and market-oriented programmes that aim to increase the income and improve the livelihood, and food and nutrition security, of smallholder farmers (and family farming) through their FOs in 14 countries in Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan,

Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam) and 4 countries in Latin America (Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Peru).

FO4A is executed by two regional sub-implementing partners: the Manila-based AFA through its affiliate national implementing agencies; and the Brussels-based AgriCord through its affiliate seven agri-agencies operating in five countries. FO4LA is also implemented by two organizations: AgriCord and COPROFAM.

FO4A has a total cost of EUR 14,99 million (around US\$ 16,32 million) while FO4LA has a total cost of EUR 2,39 million (around US\$ 2,60 million).

APFP, financed and supervised by IFAD, is designed and targeted to support farmers and rural producers, especially smallholder and vulnerable farmer/producers (and their households), through the organizations to which they belong. The aim is to contribute to an enabling environment for rural poverty reduction through instrumental support to rural smallholders and their organizations. Implemented by AFA in consortium with La Via Campesina, APFP covers FOs in 16 countries/regions (i.e. FO4A countries plus China and the Pacific region).

FO4A, FO4LA and APFP programmes have similar strategic objectives: (i) FOs and farmer-led enterprises improve technical and economic services along the value chains, in particular for youth and women; (ii) FOs influence policies and business environments for the transformation of family farming and the development of sustainable, adaptive economic initiatives and farmer-led enterprises, in particular for youth and women; and (iii) FOs are accountable organizations that are able to effectively perform their institutional functions.

B.2 Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP)

GAFSP is a demand-led and recipient-owned global partnership and a cost-effective and flexible multilateral financing mechanism dedicated to fighting hunger, malnutrition and poverty in developing countries. GAFSP supports resilient and sustainable agriculture that benefits and empowers poor and vulnerable smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth. IFAD is one of the implementing partners of GAFSP and acts as supervising entity for several initiatives. GAFSP operates through different financing windows dedicated to various actors: public actors; private sector actors; and producers' organizations (called "PO window" – originally the Missing Middle Initiative at the pilot stage).

Over the 2020–2023 period, IFAD supported the access of 10 FOs to the GAFSP PO window through three calls:

- The COVID-19 additional financing call meant to support the two ongoing Missing Middle Initiatives⁴⁶
- The 2021 call for PO window, for which three FO projects were approved by GAFSP⁴⁷
- The 2023 call for PO window, for which five FO projects were approved by GAFSP (full design and IFAD financing approval will occur in 2024; therefore, their financing is not counted in this Report).⁴⁸

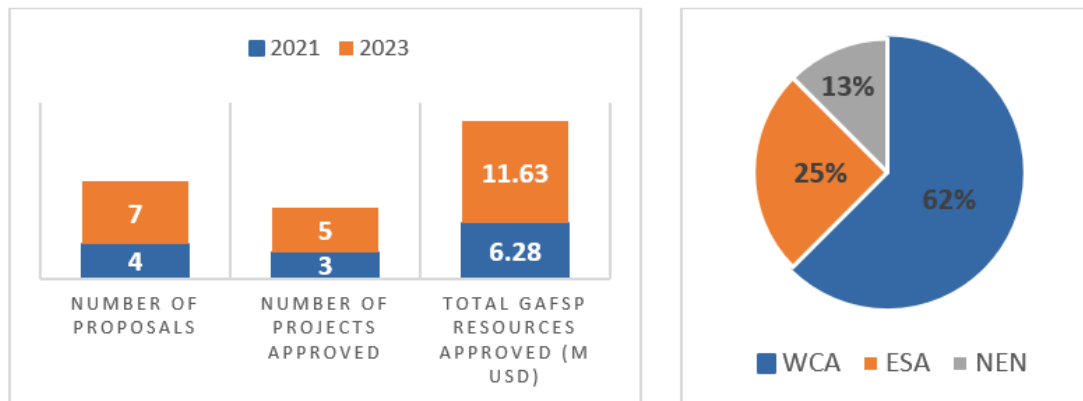
The Figure below summarize the overall portfolio of GAFSP PO window grants approved by GAFSP in 2020–2023.

⁴⁶ The two projects are: (i) Inclusion of Rural Youth in Poultry and Aquaculture Value Chains in Mali (COVID-19 additional financing implemented by the CNOP-Mali); and (ii) Using the e-granary innovative mobile platform to deliver economic services to farmers in East Africa (COVID-19 additional financing implemented by the regional FO EAFF).

⁴⁷ The three projects are: (i) Supporting Small-scale Family Farmers who are Members of CAPAD Cooperatives to be Resilient to the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic (implemented by CAPAD Burundi); (ii) Promotion of agricultural entrepreneurship and food security of local producer organizations in the DRC (implemented by COPACO DRC; and (iii) Support to the Improvement of Rural Family Poultry Farming in Departments of Mbour, Fatick and Kaolack (implemented by the National Council For Rural Consultation and Coopération in Senegal)

⁴⁸ The countries'/POs' projects approved are Chad/ Conseil National Des Producteurs Ruraux Du Tchad - CNCPRT, Kyrgyzstan/ Kyrgyz Association of Forest and Land Users - KAFLU Niger/ Coordination Nationale de la Plateforme Paysanne du Niger -CNPFPN, Rwanda/ Rwandan Farmers syndicate INGABO and Togo/ Coordination Togolaise des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs Agricoles – CTOP.

Figure 21: Overview of GAFSP PO projects approved in 2020-2023 period
(USD amounts and regional focus)



Five programmes were funded in the GASFP PO window in 2020–2023.

The two Missing Middle Initiative projects are completed and both projects finished their project completion reports. The main results of the e-granary programme are as follows:

- 116 maize and bean cooperatives have benefited from the programme.
- More than 53,000 people use the platform e-granary and more than half of them are women (31,000).
- 5,940 farmers now have access to credit worth US\$706,791, representing an achievement of 47 per cent of the targeted portfolio and 51 per cent of the number of farmers.
- Additional COVID-19 funds alone enabled the project to promptly support 486 farmers in Uganda to access US\$79,605 in credit.
- These achievements have supported farmers to prepare for the next two major planting seasons and reduce post-harvest losses through better storage, while reducing side-selling by farmers to meet the volume requirement under the supply contract with buyers.

The funds have also increased the capacity of call centres to supply e-granary users with correct information and to supplement face-to-face training and e-extension.

Box 9: Lessons learned from the e-granary project

An important lesson learned from the design and implementation of the e-granary project is that for an agribusiness start up, it is necessary to adopt a tailored approach across different countries and value chains. Uganda and Rwanda presented different business environments than Kenya, where the e-granary was first implemented, and this precipitated change in the business model, while the technology model remained the same. Another key lesson from implementation of the e-granary is that there is a need to provide for working capital to manage the market risk at the onset before trust by the farmers is built to a level where the need for the working capital can be reduced. At completion, it was noted that the design of the e-granary promoted aggregation of produce from farmers through farmers' and producers' organizations; and these farmer groups would then be linked to off-takers and the latter would enter into forward contracts with the farmer groups. However, this arrangement faced some challenges due to the twin challenge of farmers engaging in inside selling due to the need for immediate cash while at the same time the buyers could not provide minimum price guarantees for the produce. A notable lesson from this arrangement is that not all business models, costs and operational structures are suited to any commodity/product or value chain or country.

The Mali project, implemented by the FO platform National Coordination of Farmers Organizations of Mali (CNOP Mali) has just closed and undertaken a stocktaking highlighting many innovations and lessons learned for the future GAFSP-funded PO-led programmes, and are summarized in box below.

Box 10: Main innovations and lessons learned from the GAFSP project in Mali

Implemented between late 2017 and mid-2023, the “Economic Integration Project for Young Rural People in the poultry and fish value chains” (PIEJR) was implemented through CNOP-Mali, in close collaboration with its umbrella member the Association of Professional and Peasant Organizations of Mali (AOPP), which was responsible for technical implementation. The US\$3.62 million project aimed to support the creation of sustainable economic activities for the benefit of 1,000 young rural people from the CNOP-Mali/AOPP network trained on the technical and organizational levels to sustainably conduct income-generating activities in the poultry and fish sectors.

This project was part of the first wave of GAFSP Missing Middle Initiative projects with direct financing to FOs and to some extent tested the direct financing approach via a supervisory entity to support its smooth running.

PIEJR was an experience rich in innovations that the CNOP-Mali and the AOPP were able to experiment or strengthen, in particular: (i) a method of selecting rural young people based on decentralized peasant and organization networks; and (ii) a system support-accompaniment for young people based on the endogenous human resources of the CNOP-Mali /AOPP network, with the Centre International de Formation en agroécologie de Nyéléni (farmer-led training centre supported by the CNOP-Mali) at the heart of the system for transmitting technical and agroecological knowledge to trainers and young people

PIEJR also has to its credit many lessons learned for the CNOP-Mali /AOPP and for IFAD in support of future GAFSP projects. They are summarized below.

For the partner FOs (CNOP-Mali /AOPP)

Targeting young women

- Good consideration of the constraints linked to the targeting of young women, in particular the socioeconomic constraints in Mali, the marriage of young girls after their settling in, the involvement of the women's farmers' network (Fédération nationale des femmes rurales) member of CNOP-Mali and the establishment of specific coaching mechanisms relying on women relay farmers, are factors in the success of young girls' income-generating activities.

The peasant vocational training and capacity building system

- Improving the impact and viability of training activities in FOs depends, among other things, on the convergence of three essential variables: the institutional and organizational framework of the FO, their own service/system training capacities to create the necessary conditions for training its members, and the place given to the actors concerned at the stage of identifying training needs.
- Collaboration with public technical services with clear roles of each actor in carrying out the training and its monitoring is one of the guarantees of success of a project like the PIEJR.

Financing income-generating activities of youth

- The people carrying out economic projects must be identified and selected with great rigour from the outset in order to finance those who are genuinely in need or willing/motivated to bring their project to fruition at all costs. The support of a project like the PIEJR is a help, but the real triggers must come from within each community or group in order to shift the perpetual tendency of assistance and easy money from projects.
- For a project of this nature and scale, arrangements must be made from the start to ensure sustainability through the requirement for repayment of loans granted to young people.

Networking of young people and organizations at different levels and on different topics

- Networks, whether formal or informal, contribute greatly to communication, exchanges, training and information for the generation and sharing of knowledge during and after the implementation of a project.
- The empowerment of State technical services in the construction and stabilization processes of networks can help the network to disseminate and even perpetuate good practices in their respective areas.

For IFAD supporting new GAFSP projects

Project implementation approach

- FOs are capable of learning very quickly to manage national-scale projects and cooperate with international partners if they are well supported with manageable and mastered procedures.
- Efficient communication from the outset is a fundamental factor for the proper functioning of an institutional system for managing a project that is supporting sensitive groups such as young women and men.
- Better involvement of well-trained and well-aware grass-roots stakeholders on the sustainability of acquired knowledge is a fundamental element of the success of a project of this scale managed by FOs.
- Flexibility in the orientation and reorientation of activities and procedures can help to better achieve the objectives of a project of this nature and ensure the accountability of stakeholders for the proper management of resources.

Financial management

- It is important to train financial service teams from the start-up phase on results-based financial management (e.g. planning disbursements, planning the cash to be mobilized, monitoring performance ratios, budget programming backed by a disbursement plan, financial reporting analytics).

Support adapted to the needs of Producers' Organizations (POs)

- It is important to define specific support (e.g. start-up training seminar, identification of strengthening needs, technical assistance, reporting) in order to effectively support FO coordination teams to better implement GAFSP projects.

B.3 Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF)

In response to the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, IFAD established a dedicated response facility – the RPSF – in order to support the livelihoods and food security of many poor rural people who were affected by the restrictions imposed. The ultimate goal of the RPSF was to accelerate the recovery of poor and vulnerable rural people from the COVID-19 crisis. This was to be achieved through IFAD's target group having the capacity, assets and overall resilience to cope with shocks; through lessons that are incorporated into IFAD's work from the implementation and innovations of the RPSF; and through a strengthened capacity to deliver digital support. RPSF financed mainly: (i) inputs and basic assets for production of crops, livestock and fisheries; (ii) access to markets to support small-scale farmers in selling their products in conditions where market functions are restricted; (iii) rural financial services to ensure sufficient liquidity and to ease repayment requirements so as to maintain services, markets and jobs; and (iv) the use of digital services to deliver key information on production, weather, finance and markets.

IFAD initiated the Facility with US\$40 million of seed funding from grant resources.⁴⁹ All IFAD-supported country programmes that were at risk of not achieving their development outcomes due to COVID-19 were eligible to receive funding from the RPSF. Through the Facility, 85 per cent of funds were used to support 59 of the most at-risk countries with country-level financing, and 15 per cent supported particularly innovative or strategic regional initiatives, directly implemented through non-state actors – FOs, NGOs and private sector players that were already engaged in supporting IFAD – wherever they could add value to the response.

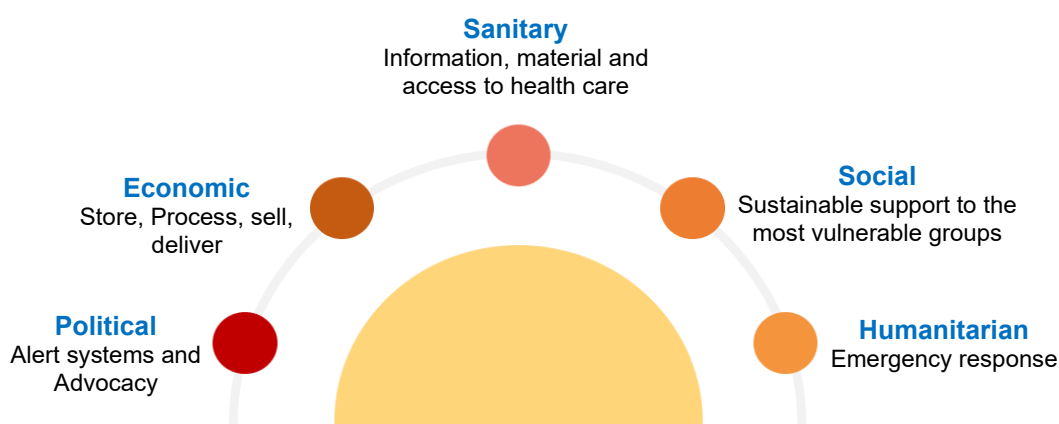
Outcomes of the FO-driven RPSF projects

Several programmes were implemented through FOs under RPSF resources – Support African Farmers in 2020 Emergency Programme (SAFE 2020), Assuring Resiliency of Family Farmers amidst COVID-19 programme (ARISE), Projet d’assistance aux familles d’éleveurs confrontées aux effets cumulés de la soudure pastorale, de l’insécurité et de la pandémie de COVID-19⁵⁰ (PAS2P), among others – and had many interesting outcomes and lessons for future IFAD programmes. The paragraphs that follow provide insights on the SAFE 2020; other cases (RBM/PAS2P and AFA/ARISE) are further described in the case studies below and attached to this report.

The **SAFE 2020** has complemented the FO4ACP COVID-19 Continuity Plan that was prepared when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. The SAFE 2020 project financed emergency activities that either fell outside the scope of FO4ACP or for which the funds available under FO4ACP were not sufficient to counter the COVID-19 pandemic impacts on the most vulnerable rural populations and smallholder farmers. The SAFE 2020 was complementing FO4ACP programme in the African continent, and both projects had the same implementation arrangements and coordination and supervision mechanisms.

The **SAFE 2020** allowed FOs to demonstrate that they are able to provide emergency support to their members in the most difficult times. The project was successful in relaunching agricultural production and limiting the spread of the pandemic in rural areas. In almost all countries, distribution of input packages of seeds and fertilizers or animal feed and veterinary products increased farmers’ production and productivity and, in some cases, reduced production costs. FOs voiced the concerns that farmers were facing and through national FOs were successful in lobbying governments on a number of issues. Through ICTs, the project successfully maintained extension services to vulnerable farmers as well as ensured input provision and in some cases e-marketing. A publication on the multiple roles of farmers’ and producers’ organizations in responding to the Covid-19 crisis was also produced in 2022 to take stock of the relevant roles that FOs could play in crisis situations⁵¹ (see Scheme below).

Figure 22: Multiplicity of Roles of FOs during the Covid-19 crisis



⁴⁹ Contributions to the facility include CAD 6 million from the Government of Canada, EUR 27 million from the Government of Germany, EUR 6 million from the Government of the Netherlands, SEK 50 million from the Government of Sweden, and CHF 2 million from the Government of Switzerland.

⁵⁰ Project to assist pastoralist families faced with the cumulative effects of the pastoral lean season, insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic

⁵¹ [IFAD, Multiple roles of farmers' and producers' organizations in responding to the covid-19 crisis, 2022](#)

Other relevant experiences promoted under SAFE 2020 are highlighted in box below.

Box 11: SAFE 2020 – good practices from the field

Contractual arrangements in Eswatini. Entering into new partnerships with public buyers (e.g. state, international organizations, schools) and private buyers (processors, traders) through contractual arrangements was key to resolving marketing problems during the COVID-19 emergency. In Eswatini, ESNAU collaborated with FAO on a project in which 221 vendors from the local markets (Mahlanya, Manzini and Mbabane markets) were to be granted with US\$163 worth of vegetable stock each. The supply of the vegetables to these vendors was sourced from ESNAU farmers, including the 40 farmers who benefited from the SAFE project. A total amount of US\$36,000 was earmarked to be received by these farmers as they supply the produce to the vendors in the three markets. The total project cost was US\$65,000, which included administration and payment of transporters. In 2022, ESNAU facilitated the supply of 565 metric tons of maize to Swazi mills, Unifoods, Arrow feeds and the National Maize Corporation (NMC). Additionally, it facilitated the supply of 55.2 metric tons of beans to NMC, Southern Trading, Growmore and other informal markets to the value of US\$65,500.

Bridging the connectivity gap in Madagascar. FOs already offering collection and marketing services improved their systems, sometimes by investing in vehicles and communication tools. In Madagascar, the major issues for the Association pour le progrès des paysans (FIFATA) and its members were connectivity and transport bottlenecks. As the restrictions limited movement of goods and people, the agri-agency Fert and FIFATA decided to follow a pragmatic approach to bridge the connectivity gap by acquiring 32 smartphones and distributing them among young FO leaders. The young leaders functioned as information relays for their fellow farmers. This action reinforced the role of the young farmer leaders within their producer groups, as the young members often have good digital skills. Those became better valorized in the functioning of the FO during the Covid-19 crisis. Further, 96 mountain bikes were acquired and distributed among relay farmers in remotely located areas to improve their ability to reach farmers in need of technical extension, as well as markets and storage facilities. Additionally, these young leaders and relay farmers attended capacity-building activities that also included information sessions on the dangers and mitigation of Covid-19. The young leaders and relay farmers used the provided digital tools to stay informed and continued to sensitize and inform other FO members on the pandemic. They took on this role in addition to their core task of extending agricultural advice and information to their peers. A total of 2,140 people benefited from their efforts, receiving Covid-19-related information and agricultural advice.

B.4 FO-led consultations in the context of UN Food System Summit preparation

In preparation for the **Food Systems Summit** (FSS, year 2021) a diverse range of stakeholders - from youth activists to indigenous leaders, smallholder farmers to scientists and private sector leaders – were invited to convene dialogues to crowdsource and identify solutions to make food systems stronger and more equitable. These dialogues aimed to bring to the Summit table voices from across all sectors of society, catalyze new opportunities for collaboration and possibly set out intentions and commitments for food systems transformation. IFAD provided technical support and helped channel the funds received to the organizations represented in the Farmers Forum and in the Indigenous Peoples Forum willing to engage in the roll-out of FSS dialogues. Specifically, IFAD disbursed USD 250,000.00 (including direct costs and indirect support costs) to ten Farmers Forum organizations. Additionally, IFAD provided funding through its operations program (project FO4ACP) for the organization of three more farmers-led independent dialogues in Lesotho, Eswatini and Tanzania.

The following organizations expressed an interest in taking an active part in the FSS process through the organization of Dialogues, and as such, they were the recipients of the funding channeled and/or disbursed by IFAD: AFA, Centro Latinoamericano de Economía Humana

(CLAEH), supporting COPROFAM, EAFF, International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) supporting the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organizations (INOFO), PAFO, PROPAC, ROPPA, SACAU, UMNAGRI and World Farmers' Organisation (WFO).

The **Global Food Systems Summit Independent Dialogue of Farmers' Organizations** convened by WFO in partnership with AFA and PAFO on 8-9 July 2021, counted 241 registered participants from across different geographic areas and sectors. As the culminating event, the Dialogue discussed the outcomes of the previous independent regional and national dialogues held by farmers' organizations across the globe, with the aim to consolidate recommendations, solutions and commitments from various participating farmers organizations into a **Food Producers Declaration**⁵², to feed into the FSS process. The dialogue's deliberations also directly informed a multi-stakeholder Global Summit Dialogue with Farmers, Fishers, Pastoralists and Other Producers on 12 July, co-convened by the FSS Special Envoy.

⁵² See in Annex IX and here: <https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/fs-summit-legacy/pledges/food-producers-declaration/en>

Case study

Supporting the resilience of family farmers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia through improved access to credit: the successful experience of the Assuring Resiliency of Family Farmers amidst COVID-19 programme (ARISE-Farmers)

The Rural Poor Stimulus Facility. The COVID-19 pandemic undermined the livelihoods and food security of many poor rural people. Given the magnitude of the challenges presented by the crisis, in April 2020 IFAD launched a multi-donor RPSF. Aligned with the UN socioeconomic response framework, RPSF sought to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods in the context of the COVID-19 crisis by ensuring timely access to inputs, information, markets and liquidity.

IFAD initiated the Facility with US\$40 million of seed funding from grant resources and mobilized an additional US\$53 million from Member States (i.e. the Governments of Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland). All funds were disbursed by 2022 as an immediate COVID-19 response. The RPSF reached more than 20 million of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, providing a valuable model for supporting communities to address catastrophes and quickly start rebuilding secure food and hygiene systems for the medium and longer terms.

Supporting the resiliency of family farmers affected by the pandemic in Asia. Implemented by the regional organization [AFA](#), the [ARISE Farmers](#) aimed to support federated farmer groups in the Asia region to meet the needs of their members and ensure a healthy and sufficient food supply during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The project was implemented in 2021–2022 with US\$2 million grant financial resources, designed as a complementary intervention to the [APFP](#), involving the same target group. ARISE focused on curbing the impact of COVID-19 on the income of family farmers through the provision of loans to local producers' organizations on concessional terms. Disbursed via national FOs, funds were used to promote producers' organizations engagement in markets through production activities, the expansion of partnership, and the strengthening of working capital. Further, ARISE focused on crops with short production cycles, with a view to foster resilience and provide a rapid respond to the effects of the crisis.

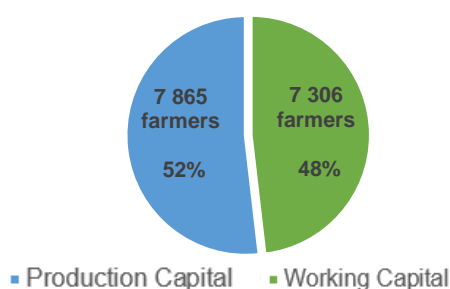
Adapting simple procedures to enable a large number of farmers to be reached.

Loan procedures were adapted to ensure easy and quick access to funds by FOs. By providing non-collateral loans with affordable interest rates, and combining support with extension services and marketing support, ARISE enabled 185 FOs and cooperatives to be reached in 8 countries: Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

A total amount of US\$1.85 million was disbursed to national FOs for the benefit of more than 15,171 farmers, with a repayment rate of 100 per cent.

Improving market access for farmers. Thanks to ARISE, farmers were able to improve their access to quality inputs, agricultural technologies and techniques, purchase raw materials from FO members, diversify and increase production, and improve access to markets through collective sales and microenterprise development. This led to an increase in household incomes and food security.

Number of farmers benefitting from credit



Examples of successful experiences follow:

- In **Cambodia**, farmers obtained a good farm gate price and secured market, and eliminated the risk of spoilage/surplus of rice. Further, a marketing contract with Amru Rice was established for 13 local cooperatives, with a total demand of 5,000 metric tons of rice. Both the income of the cooperatives and their members increased through contract farming: the premium price for cooperatives was US\$12.5 per ton and the cooperative members can sell rice at US\$50-US\$75 per ton. Cooperatives already sold 2,500 tons of organic rice and 300 tons of rice seeds.
- In the **Philippines** ARISE provided support to Malabog Integrated Enterprises Development Cooperative, a cooperative with over 35 years of experience and with 600 members engaged in agricultural production in the hinterland barangays (villages) of Paquibato District of Davao City. The loan was used to procure the coconut and cacao beans produced by the cooperative's members, enabling the cooperative to supply Franklin Baker in Davao Del Sur with 828,381 kg of whole coconuts and institutional buyers in Davao City with 20,600 kg of cacao-dried beans.
- In **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, the Jang Cooperative used ARISE funds as working capital to purchase rice from its 72 members. Generated income amounting to LAK10 million (approximately US\$500) was used to expand the rice warehouse of the cooperative.
- In **Nepal**, Bhesh Kumari Chepang, a commercial vegetable farmer, received a loan which was used to cover the costs of farm inputs and farm labour and management. As a result, she was able to generate an income of US\$507 over one season.

Main lessons. The experience from the implementation of ARISE enables lessons to be drawn for future operations in support of FOs. In particular, the engagement of AFA and national FOs represents one of the factors of project success. AFA has a long-running partnership with national FOs, an established communication network, a wide knowledge and experience of country contexts and FOs' capacities and close relations with FOs at the national level. This enabled AFA to: ensure quick and efficient fund delivery mechanisms, particularly in times of the pandemic; select credible, qualified and reliable recipients reducing the costs of protocols and processes; and reach a large number of local organizations and producers.

Further, the set-up of a revolving fund was not only an effective tool to address the effects of the pandemic, but it also proved to be an empowering instrument for FOs and their members, promoting solidarity and responsibility, and demonstrating how smallholder farmers can be solution providers to more resilient farming systems and to achieving food security.

Looking ahead. ARISE initially started as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic; However, due to the results achieved, it was renewed for another phase and scaled up in terms of geographical coverage. The new phase is being implemented in 12 countries (i.e. Cambodia, China, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines Sri Lanka and Vietnam).

Section IV: Areas for improvement in the partnership



Section IV: Areas for improvement in the partnership

The quantitative analysis presented in Section I provides important insights about the way forward to improve the partnership.

First of all, even though the participation of FOs in COSOP and project designs seems to remain globally stable and is valued by IFAD country teams, the important regional differences are calling for our attention to ensure that the involvement of FOs in IFAD operations is systematized over time. One key orientation would be to institutionalize the FAFO process and FOs systematic involvement in order to avoid any disruptions linked to the rotation of IFAD staff.

Another key finding is that, despite the globally stable involvement of FOs in the COSOP and project designs, data shows a decrease in the “advanced level” of involvement, while the more “basic level” of involvement is increasing. However, the changes in the level of participation of FOs in the design processes, from “basic” to “advanced”, reflect the change in quality of FOs’ contributions in COSOP and project preparation. Therefore, from the data we can conclude that the quality of FOs engagement worsened during the last period.

Moreover, as shown in Table 2 of Section I, the level of participation of FOs in COSOP design has significantly changed over time in most countries, even though the benefit of their participation is recognized by all IFAD country teams. Although further analysis is required to identify the reasons behind these changes, the level of participation could be affected by turnover cycles of IFAD Country Office (ICO) personnel, country directors and FO leaders, as well as lack of institutionalised processes and clarity on how to conduct the partnership.

The quantitative data disaggregated by region also shows some changing trends in the partnership in each region. While the NEN region has demonstrated significant improvement in the overall partnership with FOs, probably reinforced by getting involved in the Regional FAFO dynamics for the first time, APR and LAC regions (and ESA to a lesser extent) are witnessing a decreasing trend in the partnership with FOs. This calls for a revitalization of the partnership but also a review of the data collection tool/survey to be able to better capture the diversity of the collaboration.

During the regional FAFO processes (Section II), PMUs, FOs and ICOs were consulted about specific barriers and challenges to the partnership.⁵³ A summary of the responses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Responses of FOs, PMUs and ICOs regarding major barriers for the partnership

Specific Barriers	FOs		PMUs		ICOs	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Lack of capacities (mostly institutional and organizational)	4	4.4	31	47.0	23	54.8
Delays in implementation	11	12.2	6	9.1		0.0
Disconnection with governments	4	4.4		0.0	2	4.8
Disconnection with regional/national FO	1	1.1		0.0	3	7.1
Lack of funding - FOs	8	8.9	6	9.1	5	11.9
Lack of funding - IFAD		0.0	4	6.1		0.0
Lack of access to information about IFAD interventions	9	10.0		0.0		0.0
No relationship/No coordination with IFAD	28	31.1		0.0		0.0
Political/Economic context	5	5.6	4	6.1	1	2.4
Access/Remoteness		0.0	2	3.0		0.0
None	17	18.9	10	15.2	4	9.5
Other	3	3.3	3	4.5	4	9.5
Total	90	100	66	100	42	100

As shown, most PMUs and ICOs expressed concern about FOs’ institutional and organizational capacities as factors that significantly affected the partnership. All respondents recognized the

⁵³ The question asked to PMUs was “Are there any specific barriers or challenges that you have found in partnering with FOs in your project?”; the question asked to ICOs was, “Are there any specific barriers or challenges that you have found in enabling collaboration between IFAD and the FOs in your country and/or subregion?”; and the question asked to FOs was, “What are the specific barriers or challenges that you have found in enabling collaboration between your organization and IFAD in your country and/or subregion?”.

importance of FOs in project implementation and promoted their participation in project design (although there is room for improvement). It is well known that the capacity of FOs to consistently and effectively participate in projects and programmes, as well as in discussions and local decision-making platforms, depends on the strength of their governance and operational structures. According to ICOs and PMUs, many FOs are informal and are created just to be able to participate in a programme or project. This imposes difficulties for project implementation, specifically to apply procurement procedures efficiently and for the adoption of innovations. It also imposes restrictions on a consistent and permanent participation of FOs in COSOP and project design processes, and precludes long-lasting interaction between the government and FOs, which is key to guarantee the sustainability and scalability of projects.

On the other hand, most of the consulted FOs of ESA, LAC and WCA mentioned that they did not have any relationship or coordination with IFAD and/or did not have access to information about IFAD interventions, even though most of those FOs participate or had participated in an IFAD-funded project. In this sense, it seems that current information channels between IFAD and local FOs are not very effective. Also, a significant number of FOs indicated that the partnership is heavily affected by delays in project implementation. Delays could be caused by various reasons – for instance, delays with government procedures due to changes in government administration, or delays in payments received by FOs due to changes in PMU staff, among others. Although most of delays are related to governmental procedures, they may end up deteriorating the level of trust between IFAD and FOs.

It is worth noticing the divergence of responses between PMUs, ICOs and FOs, which sheds light on the need for a well-structured and institutionalized tripartite “co-working” strategy between IFAD, FOs and governments. This implies not only establishing commitments to jointly develop concrete actions, but also developing the right incentives to encourage the realization of these commitments and evaluating the results.

A strategy for improvement therefore relies on four major pillars, which are discussed in the sections that follow.

A. A robust action framework that involves IFAD, FOs and governments

IFAD has an almost 20-year partnership with FOs that aims to support them to evolve into stable, performing and accountable organizations able to effectively represent their members, especially in policy and programming processes, and provide them with economic services. IFAD support has been provided to FOs through investment projects and grants; however, there is limited evidence on achieved results. Also, although several spaces for dialogue have been promoted, the coordination between the government and FOs is still very limited since FOs are considered project beneficiaries and not potential implementing partners.

To overcome this challenge, it is necessary to articulate a more structured strategy and related operational mechanisms to more effectively work together (co-working) and to more systematically co-construct programmes, funding mechanisms and strategies for vulnerable rural people. Given the multiple ways in which FOs can engage in IFAD processes, it is important to prioritize actions and identify key actors for the realization of these actions. Prioritized actions to improve the partnership should be identified, discussed and agreed upon based on a shared vision and strategic framework, which should include a theory of change of the partnership. This framework could provide the analytical and decision-making tools to define the co-working strategy for the years to come.

This framework will also help to identify key actors and their roles, based on different types of FOs with different levels of structuring and organization, and different motivations and histories, which IFAD should take advantage of. Traditionally, as the data shows, the partnership has materialized through the participation of local FOs in projects as beneficiaries. Nevertheless, an evolution in the roles played by FOs can be observed, with a larger participation of certain types of FOs as service providers, implementing partners or even assuming the implementation responsibility of a project component. These operational roles of FOs are crucial not only to promote sustainability but also for FOs’ empowerment. Clearly, the role of FOs in strategic and policy engagement is fundamental.

In this regard, identifying and understanding the different roles of the types of apex FOs (national, commodity-based or group-based, second-tier FOs at territorial levels or FO platforms at national levels) is necessary. Some apex FOs could be more effective in advocacy and policy engagement and FOs' institutional and organizational strengthening, while others that are closer to grass-roots FOs could more effectively provide economic, social and environmental services to their members. In any case, IFAD should encourage such types of engagement, providing the necessary support that enables apex FOs to understand and identify major needs in the territory. This type of engagement should be supported by a strategic framework that could be jointly adopted by FOs and IFAD, at global level but most importantly at country level.

Also, apex FOs are key champions when it comes to disseminating information about IFAD-funded projects and programmes. As mentioned before, apex FOs should play a key role in capacity building of local FOs, but also encourage local FOs' participation in COSOP and project design, promoting their participation beyond that of being beneficiaries. Moreover, apex FOs can play a key role in project monitoring and supervision if linkages with the government are strong enough to facilitate dialogue and avoid project delays, responding to the demand of local FOs. Moreover, aggregated FOs at national level can be mobilized as a farmer-led feedback mechanism for IFAD projects to foster rural/farmer-driven citizen engagement. This approach has already been piloted in some countries with positive results.

Finally, the regional FAFOs have served to put on the table concrete proposals on way forward to strengthen the partnership, particularly the tri-partite partnership at country level, with some differentiated and common features arising from all regions, as summarized in box below. This is particularly relevant material to feed in the strategic framework for the IFAD-FO partnership.

Box 12: Regional FAFOs' concrete proposals to improve the IFAD-FO partnership

- Strengthen national farmers' forum processes, as well as support the farmer-led design and implementation of national and regional action plans for the UN Decade of Family Farming.
- Institutionalize the regional FAFo/regional implementation workshop joint planning to foster concrete discussions between FOs and IFAD country teams and PMUs, and to produce concrete action plans to continuously improve collaboration at country and regional levels (also important for the regional policy dialogue).
- Systematize meaningful involvement of FOs in all IFAD processes, and develop direct contracting with apex FOs as strategic implementing partners.
- Set up a permanent grant facility for direct financing to FOs, particularly on climate change adaptation and mitigation by FOs.
- Consider key subtopics important to family farmers and their organizations – e.g. artisanal fisheries, herders/pastoralists, agroecology.
- Improve the documentation of innovative partnership features and invest in knowledge management, exchange visits, cross-fertilization, and training of IFAD and PMU staff on how to engage with FOs.

B. Effective financing mechanisms

Over the last 20 years, almost US\$180 million has been provided to FOs through grants. In addition, investment projects have increasingly considered FOs as direct recipients of funds, but the total amount cannot currently be monitored by IFAD systems. Although funds allocated to FOs have significantly increased over time, there is still concern about the lack of funding to FOs directed to consolidate capacity-building processes as well as to improve the provision of services to their members. Section III of this report presents the overview of the FO grants portfolio, highlighting several features that are key in this regard:

- The FO4 programmes are focusing on the economic services, capacity building and support to advocacy of national, regional and continental apex FOs to increase their visibility,

accountability and performance in achieving their mandates. These FO4 programmes will definitely benefit from an enhanced and more systematic linkage with IFAD operations within an open dialogue between IFAD, governments and FOs that would build on these FO4 programme actions.

- The GAFSP programme has a key role to play in developing innovative FO-led projects that can inspire and influence implementation arrangements of IFAD regular investment projects, as well as help IFAD to adapt its financing procedures and processes to FO partners.
- The grants provided by IFAD (with donors' contributions) to the farmer-led consultation mechanisms in the context of the FAFO, the UNFSS UNDF, and the COP are also crucial to ensure that FOs' voices are heard in all these processes.

There are no doubts about the funding needs of FOs, but these funds should be provided according to their roles and needs. The 20 years of collaboration with FOs in the policy dialogue area, human capital in apex FOs, and the growing needs of financing for family farmers in the climate resilience/biodiversity conservation areas are demonstrating that FOs also often play a very important public utility role that cannot be considered "profitable" in the economic sense, therefore justifying the allocation of sufficient grant resources to them. During the pandemic, the implementation of the RPSF demonstrated that FOs at all levels can effectively manage these resources and obtain important results, even on very crucial topics such as social cohesion, and in very fragile environments and during challenging moments. IFAD, FOs and governments should leverage these lessons learned and design further funding programmes/ financing mechanisms strategically, considering the many roles that FOs can play. Equally, differentiated financing mechanisms should be considered for different type of FOs. To this end, working on FO mapping and profiling is a first step to be able to identify the appropriate financing instrument based on FOs' level of maturity and solidity.

C. Dialogue and decision-making processes

This year, we celebrate 20 years of the FAFO. Eight years ago, the regional FAFO successfully started in four regions, and now all five IFAD regions have organized regional FAFO sessions. Nevertheless, it is necessary to depart from the idea that the FAFO refers only to meetings that take place every four years and embrace the idea that the FAFO is an ongoing process. This implies continuous work between IFAD (headquarters and, most importantly, ICOs) and FOs.

To embrace the process idea of FAFO and the regional FAFO, it is necessary to establish clear objectives (through a well-defined co-working strategy) and monitoring systems that provide information about the development of process. Also, clear benefits of the FAFO need to be identified and adopted. FAFO gives FOs the opportunity to raise their voice and present their needs, but it also should be a process in which commitments are made by both parties, with clear consequences if these commitments are not achieved.

This year for the first time FOs were invited to participate in IFAD's replenishment consultation process through dedicated sessions with Management and Member States. This is a very welcome step in the direction of systematically engaging FOs in IFAD governance processes and providing IFAD with valuable feedback of one of its constituencies.

D. A systematic IFAD corporate assessment of partnership with FOs

In line with the recommendation presented in the last PiP report, there are still limitations on the methods and tools used to assess the partnership between IFAD and FOs. The quantitative results presented in Section I present the trend of the involvement of FOs in the design and implementation of IFAD strategies and project. Nevertheless, it is limited to presenting the outcomes of the partnership. The link between the quality of involvement and the results of the COSOP assessments over the last 15 years is a first step, though limited, toward assessing the results of the partnership. A similar exercise can be undertaken with project evaluations, although the information collection and matching process with survey data might be more complex.

In order to integrate the assessment of the partnership into corporate indicators, it is necessary to incorporate indicators of the IFAD–FO partnership into the core indicators of IFAD. Currently, Core Indicators (COI 2.2.1, 2.2.3, 2.2.4 and 2.2.5) include the involvement of FOs in project implementation as beneficiaries. Beyond this level of participation, it has been shown that the role of FOs during project design and implementation (as implementers) is recognized as crucial. Moreover, FOs' participation during COSOP design is also recognized as necessary. Therefore, the involvement of FOs in the different stages of programme/project design and implementation should be measured along with the other corporate indicators. This implies the need for data collection during project implementation to verify the quality of the partnership. Therefore, an important change in the monitoring systems and evaluation methodologies of projects and programmes is necessary. The frequency and type of interaction between FOs (at any level), PMUs and country directors should be recorded and measured to calculate the partnership indicators. In this regard, it is necessary that the RIA and IOE divisions of IFAD participate in this transformation process.

Case study

The Conseil National de Concertation des Producteurs Ruraux du Tchad (CNCPRRT) and IFAD: an evolving partnership

The CNCPRRT is an umbrella organization that was officially registered in 2006. It brings together more than 54,000 FOs operating in the 23 regions of Chad. The organization aims to support the sustainable socioeconomic development of its members by promoting family farming, conducting advocacy and lobbying, providing services, and building the capacity of member organizations.

The partnership between CNCPRRT and IFAD started in 2009 within SFOAP. Since then, it has evolved and today CNCPRRT plays a key role in the design and implementation of IFAD strategies, projects and programmes.

Strengthening CNCPRRT capacities through grant programmes. Since 2009, CNCPRRT has been among the organizations involved in capacity-building programmes supported by IFAD and like-minded donor partners. In particular, the SFOAP pilot (2009–2012) and main (2013–2017) phases, and its evolution and scaling up in the FO4ACP enabled CNCPRRT and participating FOs to strengthen their institutional and organizational capacities, have a greater say in agricultural policies and programmes, and develop economic services to facilitate the integration of smallholder farmers in value chains.

As a result, CNCPRRT successfully engaged in policymaking, contributing to the elaboration of the Agricultural Orientation Law of Chad, and conducted advocacy to obtain the separation of the chamber of agriculture from the other consular chambers in Chad. The organization also focused advocacy actions on access to land for rural women, the revision of the land law and the elaboration of a law for the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors, and obtained the integration of their members as delegates in the Conseil Économique Social et Culturel, a consultative body of the government. The increase in the membership of CNCPRRT with the integration of an additional 2,000 grass-roots groups following the pilot phase, and 9,135 FOs following the main phase, is certainly an indicator of its improved credibility and accountability as an organization representing farmers in the country. In addition, grant programmes promoted partnership with IFAD at country level.

Improved professionalization and visibility enhanced CNCPRRT's participation in IFAD COSOP and project design and implementation. Starting from 2010, the role of CNCPRRT in the design and implementation of IFAD strategies and initiatives saw a positive evolution.

- **The design of IFAD COSOPs 2010–2015 and 2020–2025.** The first COSOP stated that CNCPRRT should become a privileged interlocutor and the principal representative of Chad's producers for IFAD, particularly in relation to the strengthening of FOs and the setting up of second-tier and apex organizations as contemplated in the COSOP strategic objectives. The COSOP established that CNCPRRT would be supported and strengthened and that it would be integrated in the country programme management team responsible for assessing progress on COSOP implementation, and plan corrective measures to enhance impact. Since then, CNCPRRT has held a seat in the national steering committee of the IFAD projects. For the most recent COSOP 2020-2025, CNCPRRT was also involved as strategic partner, particularly in the context of the implementation of PARSAT and RePER (see paragraphs below), by increasing the responsibility of CNCPRRT and ownership FOs and beneficiary organizations with a view to ensuring sustainability of development interventions.
- **Programme D'appui Au Développement Rural Dans Le Guéra (PADER-G), 2010–2016.** PADER-G aimed to lay the groundwork for sustainable improvements in the food security and incomes of the rural population of the Guéra region. CNCPRRT conducted the profiling of 846 FOs as a contribution to the design of the programme, enabling it to adapt its support to the

different typologies of profiled organizations. Further, the organization was entrusted with the responsibility to mobilize and provide capacity building and training to supported FOs under the project component 3 “Capacity building of FOs and their organizations”. In that context, CNCPRT received financial support to develop a directory of FOs in the region. CNCPRT was also represented in the programme steering committee with a consultative role and actively participated in supervision and mid-term review missions.

- **Projet d’Amélioration de la Résilience des Systèmes Agricoles au Tchad (PARSAT), 2014–2021.** The profiling conducted by CNCPRT under PADER-G was used in the design of PARSAT. to better target project interventions in support of FOs. Further, CNCPRT was part of the team participating in the project completion mission in 2022.
 - **Projet Renforcement de la Productivité des Exploitations Agropastorales, Familiales et Résilience (RePER), 2018–2025.** CNCPRT plays a role in the project to support the mobilization and professionalization of FOs. In particular, it accompanies organizations at the grass-roots and at different levels of structuring, to strengthen their associative dynamic and their ability to deliver technical and economic services to their members (e.g. input supply, technical advice, market information and prices, mobilization of working capital, access to equipment, group marketing, provision of post-harvest services). In addition, in 2021 CNCPRT conducted a diagnostic of FOs in the project area to identify FOs to be supported. The study enabled more than 6,700 organizations to be covered and in-depth profiling of over 300 FOs to be undertaken, out of which 60 were selected to receive project support. The project is also planning to provide institutional support to CNCPRT, particularly in relation to policy engagement and dialogue and for the popularization of the supranational law on cooperatives defined by the Organization for the harmonisation of business law in Africa (OHADA).
 - **Projet de Renforcement de l’Innovation dans l’Entrepreneuriat Agro-pastoral des Jeunes et Femmes du Tchad (RENFORT), 2021–2027.** RENFORT aims to promote entrepreneurship and long-term economic mainstreaming of young people and women in agro-sylvo-pastoral and fish value chains. CNCPRT was involved in the targeting process of the project. It is also expected to receive capacity building and to be involved in FOs’ structuring, with a special focus on youth and women entrepreneurship.
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The Way Forward

This 2024 Session of the Global Farmers' Forum is being held after four years of intense uncertainty characterised by multiple crisis (including the COVID19 pandemic) and challenges, and in a very important moment for FOs and IFAD as it celebrates 20 years of existence of the FAFO as a bottom-up process of consultation and dialogue between IFAD and the main global, continental and regional representatives of small-scale farmers and food producers' organizations.

It is also a strategic moment after the second round of regional FAFOs has taken place, with geographical balance, stocktaking the benefits of IFAD's decentralization for the FAFO. The key messages emerging from the regional FAFOs are: (i) promoting country-level farmers' forums to concretely foster the national dialogues between governments, IFAD and FOs is a great opportunity now that the all IFAD operational teams are based in the countries; (ii) it is critical to mobilize adequate tools and financing to strengthen FOs at various levels of institutional capacity and/or maturity to better fulfil their mandates based to their context (e.g. economic, social and environmental, intermediate with local markets, processing enterprises, rural finance stakeholders, public utility role through policy engagement, farmer-led rural people's feedback mechanisms); and (iii) it is necessary to exchange knowledge across countries and across regions on effective ways to engage with FOs for more efficient, empowering, sustainable and scalable rural development impact.

The timing is also strategic, as this eighth global meeting of the Farmers' Forum is being organized in conjunction with the process of IFAD13, where new instrumental orientations are confirmed and where the IFAD-FO partnership can find many opportunities. For example: (i) leveraging on the many examples where FOs could have impactful interventions in fragile contexts; (ii) building on the vast experience of small-scale farmers and food producers' organizations in preserving biodiversity and developing climate adaption practices; and (iii) reinforcing private sector engagement by empowering FOs to become stronger partners in win-win alliances with other private actors.

The 2024 Global Farmers' Forum will be the opportunity for a strategic discussion about the findings of this report with the aim of building on what works well, address the areas for improvements identified as well as agree on the future direction of the IFAD-FOs partnership.

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