

# TOWARDS SAFE FOOD, NUTRITIOUS DIETS, AND RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS

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## Welcome Remarks

**Alvaro Lario**

**Associate Vice President, Financial Operations Department  
International Fund for Agricultural Development**

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to express my thanks to the Asian Development Bank for allowing me to be here, and also our partners of the World Vegetable Centre, FAO, and others for inviting IFAD and myself to this Dialogue.

The upcoming Food Systems Summit will enable us to build on our complementarity, look for economies of scale, and cross fertilize through sharing of experiences. This will enable the development community to spark concrete and climate neutral solutions to promote safe foods, nutritious diets, and resilient food systems.

Let me start by sharing some stories of IFAD and its work on sustainable food systems. IFAD is the only UN Specialized Agency and DFI exclusively focused on, and dedicated to, transforming agriculture, rural economies, and food systems. IFAD invests in the last mile, targeting exclusively food-insecure people in rural areas, across the spectrum of income categories.

As a replenishment fund, along with other DFIs and MDBs, IFAD shares the mandate to address market inconsistencies and build bridges between governments and the private sector, bringing together domestic and international agendas. This is IFAD's DNA, and it is what we have been striving to do for over 40 years.

IFAD expertise in areas such as value chain development; the provision of last mile soft agricultural investments to complement large infrastructure; climate change adaptation for smallholder farmers' resilience; and cross-cutting themes such as youth, gender and nutrition are all of high relevance to the strategic priorities of the FSS and align with ADB's Operational Plan for Rural Development and Food Security in its 2030 Strategy.

As the last two State of Food Insecurity (SOFI) reports have also shown us, the world is falling behind on SDGs 1 and 2. The Asia region is facing a range of old and new challenges that are extremely relevant for the mandate of our two institutions.

Despite the remarkable progress in reducing poverty rates in the region, almost 300 million still live in extreme poverty (<1.90 USD/day) and another 900 million are highly vulnerable poor (< 3.20 USD/day).

Food insecurity and malnutrition remain important threats, with almost 80 million children suffering from stunting, 34 million from wasting and 12 million from acute malnutrition.

In the context of such growing challenges and changing landscape, we all need to make an extra effort to make a significant contribution to the ambitious targets set by the 2030 SDGs.

IFAD has just recently completed its twelfth replenishment, and one of our key messages highlights that stronger policy engagement and strategic partnerships will underpin IFAD's efforts to expand and deepen impact. With the right policies and investments, agriculture could unlock an extra US\$2 trillion in rural growth, much of which could benefit small-scale producers in developing countries.

Agriculture remains a major economic driver in much of Asia. With a majority of the world's estimated 500 million smallholder farmer households residing in Asia. IFAD is empowering smallholders through its loan and grant programmes, policy engagement, and partnerships, working with rural communities, farmer organizations, governments, donors, and the private sector.

Specifically, to the Asia Pacific Region, by the end of 2019, IFAD had invested US\$2.8 billion in the region's ongoing portfolio of 60 projects in 20 countries.

In the dialogue today Mongolia will be showcased. In terms of climate and greenhouse gas emissions, as we know, the Government of Mongolia is pro-actively engaged to mitigate the impact of livestock contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by developing actions for enhancing the sustainability of livestock production.

Important actions include: (i) improving the efficiency and productivity of livestock per unit; (ii) enhancing carbon sequestration through the rehabilitation, restoration, and responsible utilization of rangelands, and (iii) developing food safety and traceability of products for an export-oriented livestock production.

In alignment with these policies, IFAD has been a traditional partner of the Government of Mongolia and since 2011 is co-financing the Project for Market and Pasture Management Development (PMPMD).

The goal of this project is to contribute to the empowerment of poor rural women and men to achieve higher incomes and sustainable improvements in their livelihoods, focusing on (a) Market development; (b) Pasture management and climate change adaptation; and (c) Project management promoting an enabling environment for business development.

The efforts of this project are focused on:

- better management of the livestock and pasture to increase income, livelihood and mitigate climate change impacts and
- diversify the source of income in rural areas, particularly for women and youth, also indirectly contributing to nutrition improvement, both in quantity and diversity.

Other examples include co-financing opportunities with private financial sector, like project recently signed with Khan Bank, to increase the access to finance for business activities for women, individuals, and Small Medium Enterprises in a sustainable and competitive. (Projects include in-farm and off-farm activities: Milk processing, Vegetable production, etc. including greenhouse models adapted to this specific region).

Another example is an innovative partnership with the National representation of the Farmer Organization in Mongolia (NAMAC). This project develops and finances jointly sustainable, professional, and market-oriented Business plans for farmer organizations, including diversification of rural income and production, processing, and market access.

IFAD looks forward to strengthening its 40+ year long relationship with the ADB, which as of today, amounts to 30 projects in 11 different countries. Rural people are among the most vulnerable to undernutrition, with rural women, adolescent girls and children needing targeted support.

Policy makers must invest, and encourage responsible public and private investment, in nutrition and gender-sensitive agrifood value chains to stimulate economic growth and end hunger and malnutrition.

IFAD will continue committed to supporting the various national dialogues and the FSS as a member of the Advisory Committee, UN Task Force, and the UN Anchor for Action Track 4 - advancing equitable livelihoods and as a member of the Finance Lever and Champions network.

Let me finalize by thanking you all for participating today and to ADB for the continued collaboration between IFAD and the ADB. I look very much forward to continue collaborating with all of you towards a successful Summit this Fall.