



Investing in rural people

21 February 2024

## **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**

*Statement by IFAD at the High-level segment of United Nations 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Assembly, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024*

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Alvaro Lario, the President of IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today. It fills me with optimism that agriculture and food systems can be prioritized at UNEA.

The world is not prepared for the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. In particular, **agricultural systems** will face enormous impact from higher temperatures and extreme weather, undermining food security and nutrition worldwide. Yet, international adaptation finance flows to developing countries are 10 to 18 times below estimated needs. Small-scale farmers, who produce around a third of the world's food, get very little of that climate funding—just 0.8% of the total, around USD 5.5 billion in 2019/2020<sup>1</sup>. This is deeply unfair to these farmers and puts global food security at risk.

At the same time, unsustainable food systems are contributing to climate change, harming biodiversity, and damaging the environment. More than half of new farmland comes at the expense of forests, and as the demand for food grows, this pressure on land will only increase.

The latest COP28 declaration<sup>2</sup> emphasizes the need for sustainable and resilient food systems. Small farms are crucial for this, as they protect biodiversity and keep us healthy. Smallholder farmers deserve fair compensation for their vital contributions and sustainable livelihoods.

When we talk about fixing food systems, we need to keep our solutions broad. We must consider gender, youth, nutrition, climate, pollution, the role of businesses, and biodiversity. Farms have lost 75% of their plant genetic diversity in the last century alone, which has big impacts on our health and the environment.

We need solutions for these interconnected problems at scale, and we need them now.

That's why, in our upcoming funding cycle, IFAD has raised its climate finance target to 45% of our expected level of investments of US\$ 3.6 Billion over the next three years to support comprehensive development programs towards climate adaptation and mitigation. We're prioritizing nature-based solutions to restore and protect ecosystems, aiming to double our impact on smallholder farmers, indigenous communities, and rural populations, ultimately enhancing the lives and resilience of 100 million people.

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<sup>1</sup> Small-scale farmers (cultivating less than 2 ha of land) and actors servicing them (farmers organizations, cooperatives, agribusinesses, etc.)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cop28.com/en/food-and-agriculture>

IFAD leverages its own resources by facilitating access to adaptation finance for small scale farmers from multilateral funds such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility and the Adaptation Fund to efficiently direct funding for climate, biodiversity, and environmental projects to vulnerable groups. We have channelled about half a billion dollars from these sources over three years to rural communities.

Multilateralism is critical to address global challenges and turn them into opportunities. That is why we also collaborate on impactful initiatives like the Great Green Wall and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, fostering partnerships to address environmental, biodiversity, and climate challenges through food systems.

The 2030 Agenda and SDGs offer an unprecedented chance for food systems collaboration. We're committed to reaching the most vulnerable communities and stand united with other Rome-based agencies, UNEP, and delegates across this room in pursuing these shared values and goals.

Thank you for your attention.