



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

*Summary*

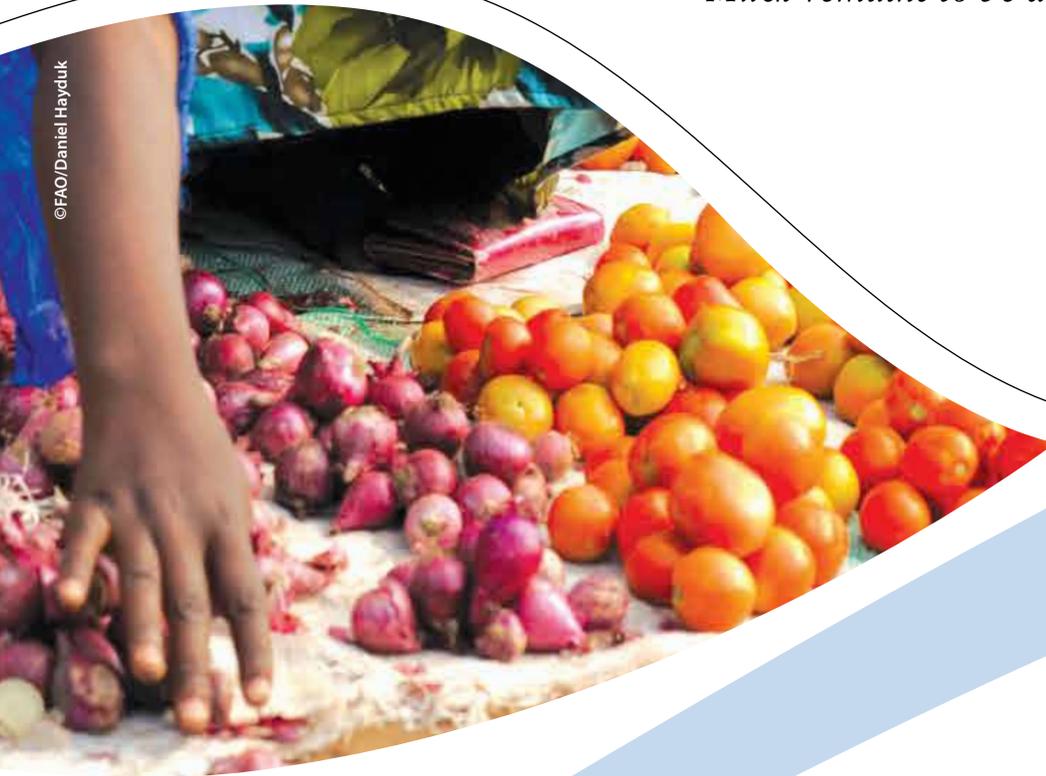
# Building a common vision for *sustainable* food and agriculture

PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES



*Agriculture is facing an unprecedented confluence of pressures that urges for profound changes in our food and agriculture (crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries, and aquaculture) systems.*

*A lot of work has already been carried out by FAO Member Countries in order to improve the sustainability of food and agriculture. Much remains to be done.*



# A common *vision*

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**FAO's vision of sustainable food and agriculture is that of a world in which food is nutritious and accessible for everyone. It is a world in which natural resources are managed in a way that maintain ecosystem functions to support current and future human needs.**

In this vision, farmers, pastoralists, fisher-folks, foresters and other rural dwellers have the opportunity to actively participate in, and benefit from, economic development, have decent employment condition and work in a fair price environment. Rural women, men, and communities live in food security, and have control over their livelihoods and equitable access to resources which they use in an efficient way.

**A holistic vision of sustainability must explore opportunities for synergies, as well as trade-offs, and consider external forces that shape agriculture, including the macro-economic environment and climate change.**



# Key principles

Building on extensive work that promotes sustainability in various production systems, FAO proposes to integrate these into a single Sustainable Food and Agriculture approach. This approach has been developed to support and accelerate the transition to more sustainable food and agriculture systems.

**The approach is based on five principles that balance the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable food and agriculture.** They provide a basis for developing adapted policies, strategies, regulations and incentives.

- 1 Improving efficiency in the use of resources*  
This includes the use of natural resources, energy external inputs, and labour. Modifying current practices can do much to improve the productivity of many food and agricultural production systems.
- 2 Direct action to conserve, protect and enhance natural resources*  
Food and agricultural production depends on natural resources and therefore the sustainability of production depends on the sustainability of the resources themselves. Much can be done to reduce negative impacts and enhance the status of natural resources.
- 3 Protect rural livelihoods and improve equity and social well-being*  
Ensuring that producers have adequate access to and control of productive resources, and addressing the gender gap, can contribute significantly to reducing poverty and food insecurity in rural areas.

4 *Enhance the resilience of people, communities and ecosystems, especially to climate change and market volatility*

Extreme weather events, market volatility and civil strife impair the stability of agriculture. Policies, technologies and practices that build producers' resilience to threats would also contribute to sustainability.

5 *Good governance is essential for the sustainability of both the natural and human systems*

The transition to sustainable production can only take place when there is the right balance between private and public sector initiatives, as well as accountability, equity, transparency and the rule of law.



# The way forward

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Strengthening sustainability in food and agriculture is a process. It takes account of the context in each country. It must be underpinned by the best available science.

**It requires conviction, political commitment, knowledge and people's participation and ownership.**

The process of governing the transitioning to sustainable food and agriculture requires a capability of adapting to change by all involved. Collective learning is reinforced if such processes are transparent, participatory, and if different stakeholders are willing and able to share responsibility. In many cases, different strategies, institutions and approaches used are required to adapt.

**Integration should be promoted, at national level, by facilitating inter-sectoral collaboration and ensuring that sectoral policies and programmes are compatible.**

A unified perspective and approach at country level – valid across all agricultural and natural resource sectors and taking into account social, economic and environmental considerations – will ensure the effectiveness of action on the ground.



# How **FAO** *can help*

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**A wide range of sustainable development tools – including methodologies, guidelines, and indicators developed by FAO – can support countries in making the transition, and could support development and implementation of national agricultural development programmes.**

These tools can assist Member Countries and key stakeholders in strengthening their technical capacity to evaluate, select and implement innovations, in building their institutional capacities, and in forging partnerships between countries and institutions. They also can help them in participating effectively in international instruments impacting productivity and sustainability in agriculture, and developing tools and methodologies for collecting and analysing data and indicators for monitoring progress.



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