



2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum Side Event

Strategic Investments for Resilient Agrifood Systems: Driving SDG Progress through Partnership

26 January. 9:30 - 1:00 am, Zoom

Organized by: Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI), FAO, Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD), IFAD, WMO

Background on the Event

Agrifood systems transformation at scale requires cross-sectoral action, encompassing secure water resources, affordable energy and rural infrastructure, grounded in a participatory approach. This would offer a tenfold socio-economic and environmental return, unlocking US\$4.5 trillion in business opportunities per year. However, current investment models are highly fragmented, not grounded in the capabilities of each sector, and in the local realities. The event objectives were as follows:

1. Examine the complementary roles of public, private, and multilateral actors in financing resilient agrifood systems, ensuring alignment with sector-specific capabilities
2. Explore multi-stakeholder partnerships for integrating climate resilience, water/energy security, and inclusive infrastructure into agrifood investment strategies
3. Lay the groundwork for a partnership guide to unpack coordinated investment mechanisms, enabling integrated and participatory SDG action

The webinar had 160+ participants from around the world, and the [full recording can be accessed here](#).

Key Issues Discussed

On the complementary roles of public, private and multilateral partners (Objective 1):

1. Participants consistently emphasized that agrifood systems face systemic challenges that cannot be addressed by any single actor. While public, private, and multilateral financing tools exist, the core challenge lies in aligning and sequencing these instruments effectively across stakeholders.
2. Financing for agrifood systems has remained largely flat despite rising hunger, climate shocks, and economic volatility, and where financing does exist, it is unevenly targeted. It is not reaching poorer countries, nor the most vulnerable populations within them, including smallholders, women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples.
3. Risk—both real and perceived—was identified as a central barrier to alignment, particularly for private-sector engagement in smallholder agriculture and fragile contexts. Fragmented markets, climate volatility, uncertainty around returns, and geopolitical instability further constrain long-term investment planning. Financial institutions tend to de-risk by allocating capital where political traction and market certainty are strongest, leaving many value chains and geographies underserved.
4. System-wide responses involving multiple stakeholders, including governments, companies, and international organizations, must operate with a shared understanding of each actors' mandates. Coordination and planning are preconditions for effective investment in agrifood systems transformation. Speakers stressed that meaningful alignment requires clarity on complementary roles: public actors shaping enabling environments and absorbing early-stage risk; multilateral

institutions deploying concessional finance, guarantees, and technical assistance; and private actors scaling viable models once risks are reduced. Without this clarity, partnerships risk remaining aspirational rather than operational.

On integrating climate resilience, water/energy security, and inclusive infrastructure considerations (Objective 2):

1. A recurring theme was the fragmentation of investment across agriculture, water, energy, and infrastructure, despite the interdependence of these systems. Sectoral silos—reflected in institutional mandates, budgeting processes, and project design—limit efficiency and prevent integrated responses to country needs. At the country level, agrifood systems are rarely treated as a coherent investment domain, with no corresponding budget frameworks to support integrated planning.
2. Climate resilience emerged as a core dimension of integration. Effective resilience depends on accessible, user-friendly climate, meteorological, and hydrological information that informs both immediate decision-making and long-term planning. However, climate services are under-resourced and often insufficiently integrated into investment strategies and infrastructure design, limiting their impact.
3. Participants highlighted that resilience and adaptation investments are inherently cross-sectoral and require early-stage coordination across ministries and partners. Yet coordination is transaction-intensive, often lacking incentives, accountability mechanisms, or high-level political backing. Without strong oversight and sequencing, investments remain projectized and difficult to scale.

Key Recommendations for Action

On laying the groundwork for a partnership guide (Objective 3):

The following recommendations will be further unpacked through upcoming partner engagements that can culminate in a robust Partnerships Guide:

1. Investments must reflect local priorities through participatory design, ensuring that resilience and inclusion translate into tangible benefits on the ground. The guide should encourage partners to establish baselines of existing initiatives and identify what is already working.
2. The guide should highlight approaches for integrating climate, meteorological, and hydrological information into national planning, infrastructure design, and project pipelines, supported by evidence of returns and co-benefits.
3. A partnership guide should emphasize the importance of starting with clearly articulated vision and objectives followed by explicit articulation of who does what, when, and why. This can include practical guidance on role differentiation and how responsibilities may evolve from early-stage risk-taking to scaling and market expansion.
4. Resilience should be framed not only as risk management, but as a strategic investment opportunity that delivers economic, social, and environmental return.
5. The guide could help outline mechanisms such as joint results frameworks, shared indicators, and accountability arrangements that align incentives and make collaboration operational rather than aspirational.
6. To reduce risk and attract capital, partnerships should promote the bundling of “soft” and “hard” investments — such as skills, market access, climate services, infrastructure, and logistics — tailored to specific value chains and regional dynamics.