

Asia and the Pacific operational region

35 countries

Afghanistan	1
Bangladesh	7
Bhutan *	2
Cambodia	4
China	3
Cook Islands	
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	
Fiji	
India	6
Indonesia	5
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	
Kiribati	
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2
Malaysia	
Maldives	1
Marshall Islands	
Micronesia (Federated States of)	
Mongolia	
Myanmar	2
Nauru	
Nepal	3
Niue	
Pakistan	5
Palau	
Papua New Guinea	1
Philippines	1
Samoa	1
Solomon Islands	
Sri Lanka	2
Thailand	
Timor-Leste	
Tonga	1
Tuvalu	
Vanuatu	
Viet Nam	2

Numbers indicate ongoing projects and programmes

* Countries with ongoing ASAP grants

US\$2,431.8 million

invested by IFAD in the region's ongoing portfolio

US\$92.3 million

in IFAD financing approved in 2023

49 ongoing programmes and projects

in partnership with 18 countries in the region at the end of 2023

4 new programmes and projects

approved in 2023 in Bangladesh (2 projects), Indonesia and Solomon Islands

1 new country strategic opportunities programme

for the Philippines

Highlighted project

Bangladesh

The Promoting Agricultural Commercialization and Enterprises Project (PACE) restored activities in the pandemic-hit rural enterprise sector. In addition to financing, the project provided technical, technological and marketing support to rural microenterprises. It also provided market infrastructure, e-commerce services and support for decent rural employment.

Over 1 million people have been reached

More than half of those benefiting from the project (59 per cent) were women

Support has been offered to more than 225,000 rural entrepreneurs and other people involved in rural business activities

More than 400,000 people have been provided with access to financial services

Bangladesh

Anjuyara Khatun and her three daughters no longer struggle to buy enough food now that she earns an income from the basket-making business she started.

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Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) faced additional challenges before the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine. Despite multiple shocks, the region is showing resilient growth, driving around two thirds of global growth in 2023. Yet hunger currently stands at 8.5 per cent in Asia and 7 per cent in Oceania – both figures slightly higher than when the SDGs were agreed in 2015. There is a need to change the trajectory.

IFAD remains dedicated to advancing rural transformation, addressing the vulnerabilities in the region's food systems and ensuring that no one is left behind. As of December 2023, IFAD-financed projects in the region of Asia and the Pacific had reached more than 4 million people, helping them to improve their productivity, get their products to remunerative markets and improve their resilience to climate change.

The main priorities of IFAD's ongoing work in the region are forging dynamic partnerships with the private sector, creating economic opportunities for women and mobilizing climate finance while championing biodiversity. By scaling up these approaches, meaningful changes towards achieving the SDG targets are possible.

Partnering with the private sector

Many small-scale farmers lack access to markets where they can sell their surpluses. Private partnerships are therefore vital to improve their incomes and to make nutritious local products available to local people. In northern Pakistan, the Economic Transformation Initiative is teaming up with the private sector to set up collection centres for small-scale dairy producers so that they can get their milk to market. As a consequence, farmers have been able to increase their earnings and reduce wastage.

“Now I can sell the excess milk,” says Tasleem Bano, a small-scale dairy producer and participant in the project. “The extra money I make from this helps with various household expenses. I can also pay my children’s school fees.”

Across the region, other projects, such as the Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project in Bangladesh, also involve partnerships with the private sector. The project works closely with Bengal Meat, which trains small-scale farmers in livestock rearing and purchases cows from them.

In South-East Asia, the Sustainable Farming in Tropical Asian Landscapes (SFITAL) project is a regional five-year agricultural development initiative that benefits two IFAD projects – READSI in Indonesia and RAPID in the Philippines. It links small-scale cacao farmers to global supply chains to turn them into competitive producers of cacao products and committed environmental stewards. Funded by IFAD, SFITAL is being implemented by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) with Mars Inc. This partnership with Mars has facilitated small-scale farmers' ability to sell their produce to the company's buying centres after meeting the required quality standards, improving their market access and remuneration.

As well as improving access to markets, boosting collaboration with private investors offers opportunities to connect small-scale farmers to technology, innovations and services. It is crucial for growing our portfolio and we are constantly looking for opportunities to do more in this area. In addition to our project work, in 2023 IFAD and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations hosted the Bangladesh Agricultural Investment Forum 2023, which was dedicated to identifying private sector partners who were willing and able to enter into mutually beneficial arrangements with small-scale farmers across the region.

Fostering high-quality natural resources and shifting to climate-smart agricultural practices

Maintaining and restoring ecosystems can change lives. Access to high-quality water is especially important in many remote semi-arid and arid regions. In India's Odisha State, OPELIP (Odisha Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups Empowerment and Livelihoods Improvement Programme) worked with members of the local community to install solar-powered water systems. These systems not only reduced greenhouse gas emissions but also provided a consistent source of clean water, even without electricity. As a result, the incidence of waterborne diseases decreased, and women now have more time for their families and for income-generating activities. As of 2023, OPELIP had positively impacted 100,000 households, leading to improved living conditions and higher incomes. It secured land and forest rights, promoted advanced farming practices and encouraged the creation of profitable microenterprises.

“We’re very happy, as we now get clean water at our doorstep,” says Suka Dehury, who participated in the project. “We can take regular baths and wear clean clothes. We even use surplus wastewater for kitchen gardens and producing green vegetables.”

In the semi-arid provinces of northern Pakistan, an ambitious canal irrigation system spanning hundreds of kilometres has regenerated local ecosystems, transforming barren land into productive farmland. Along with training in food production and processing, and the construction of new roads to reach markets, the Economic Transformation Initiative has enabled local people to thrive in their homes and reduced the need for them to look for jobs elsewhere.



“The water canal system was actually a dream of our ancestors,” said Muhammed Abbas, a small-scale farmer and participant in the project. “The prosperity we are seeing in our village now is indescribable.”

In Bhutan, the Commercial Agriculture and Resilient Livelihoods Enhancement Programme is promoting a climate-smart village approach that is bringing climate-smart agricultural practices and technologies to entire villages. The programme prioritizes renewable energy technologies, including biogas, solar irrigation pumps and greenhouse solar dryers. In total, 12 climate-smart villages have been established, with more than 27,000 households benefiting from strengthened climate resilience and cleaner air.

Promoting women’s empowerment through innovation

Much progress has been made in creating opportunities for women to improve their incomes and increase their participation in rural communities. For example, the Smallholder Agribusiness Partnership Programme in Sri Lanka is challenging gender stereotypes and creating economic opportunities for women in agriculture through its Change4gender in Agriculture initiative.

This project has trained over 1,000 women for entrepreneurship, and for decision-making roles within communities. Labour-saving technologies and changing gender norms around household work have been key to the project’s success.

“I wasn’t always a farmer,” said Shanika, who participated in the project. “I started out working from home but now I’m a thriving greenhouse bell pepper entrepreneur.”

Boosting resilience in the Pacific with digital tools

In the Pacific Islands, addressing the need for innovation and adaptation in agrifood systems is a key strategy for recovery. In collaboration with the Government of Australia, IFAD launched the Pacific Islands Rural and Agriculture Stimulus Facility (PIRAS) in 2022. This programme focuses on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, food self-sufficiency, nutrition and sustainable agricultural livelihoods in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu, benefiting over 20,000 farmers. TraSeable Farms, a versatile agriculture mobile app and web platform, plays a vital role in supporting Pacific communities facing pandemic-related economic challenges. The app provides farmers with technical guidance, real-time weather updates and market data to identify the most profitable markets for their products, while also facilitating connections between small-scale producers and new buyers.