Agriculture is a key sector of Italy’s multilateral engagement

Italy spent US$299 million on official development assistance (ODA) to agriculture and rural development in 2016 (the latest year for which complete data is available). This corresponds to 6% of its total ODA, which is slightly below the 7% average spent by other members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

Italy channels large shares of its ODA to agriculture and rural development through multilateral organizations (US$213 million, or 71% of total ODA in 2016). Contributions through the EU represented 50% of Italy’s total ODA to agriculture and rural development in 2016, making it the largest recipient of Italy’s agriculture multilateral ODA. Italy also maintains close relationships with the Rome-based United Nations (UN) organizations working on agriculture and related issues. Italy is traditionally a large funder to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP). The second-biggest amount (US$27 million, 9%) of multilateral contributions of the sector in 2016 went through the World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA). FAO was the third-largest recipient of Italy’s multilateral ODA to agriculture and rural development in 2016 (4%), while IFAD received 2%. WFP did not receive any funding in 2016. In July 2018, FAO signed a partnership agreement with the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) to further activities around agriculture innovation for family farmers, particularly small land-owners.

‘Agriculture and food security’, is one of the priority sectors outlined in the Programming Guidelines and Directions for Italian Development Cooperation 2017-2019. The main initiative mentioned within the sector is the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, which brings together 38 donors, multilateral organizations, and financial institutions to exchange knowledge and programs aimed at promoting rural development, nutrition, and agricultural productivity. The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) is a member of the platform’s board and has confirmed a financial contribution, but has not specified the amount or timing. Italy also supports research and development on agriculture through participation in the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) partnership. Italy contributed US$5 million to CGIAR in 2016.

Italy’s bilateral ODA to agriculture and rural development stood at US$102 million in 2017 (the latest year for which bilateral data is available), up from US$86 million in 2016, taking Italy back to nearly the level of funding that it contributed in 2015. Bilateral cooperation for agriculture and rural development stood at around 3% of Italy’s total 2017 bilateral ODA. This is very low compared to other donors of the OECD’s DAC, who spend, on average, 7% of their bilateral ODA on agriculture. This low share is, however, explained by high costs of hosting refugees in 2017, which distort the overall picture of funding. When excluding these costs, agriculture projects accounted for 7% of Italy’s bilateral funding. Italy’s bilateral support focused on agricultural development (38% in 2017), rural development (16%), followed by agricultural education and training (14%).

The largest single amount of bilateral agriculture ODA disbursed by Italy went to the region of Sub Saharan Africa (US$11.4 millions) channeled through the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) for education activities around biosafety.

**DGCS defines strategic priorities on agriculture**

Priorities within agriculture are set by the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGCS) (see Question Four: ‘Who are the main actors in Italy’s development cooperation?’). DGCS’s geographic departments, as well as the office for ‘Multilateral Cooperation’, are relevant actors for defining Italy’s agriculture policy. Within Italy’s development agency, AICS, the ‘Rural Development and Food’ office is in charge of setting priorities around agriculture.

Rome hosts the main UN agencies tasked with addressing food security, agriculture, and sustainable development issues. FAO, WFP, and IFAD are together referred as the ‘Rome Agri-food hub’. The government has a close
relationship with these agencies and Italy’s development cooperation in the sector of agriculture is therefore heav-

ily influenced by the policies of the Rome-Agri-food Hub.

ITALY’S ODA TO AGRICULTURE
US$ millions

2014 2015 2016

Multilateral agriculture ODA Bilateral agriculture ODA Agriculture ODA as % of total ODA

OECD CRS, and imputed multilateral contributions to the agriculture and rural development sector. DAC secretariat estimations. In 2017 prices.

RECIPIENTS OF ITALY’S AGRICULTURE ODA, 2016
Total: US$299 million

OECD CRS and imputed multilateral contributions to the agriculture sector. DAC secretariat estimates. In 2017 prices.