



## Evaluation Digest

Issue 13, February 2017

# FAO's technical cooperation assistance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia achieves notable results but has not influenced directly the country's food security policies

*A recent evaluation by the FAO Office of Evaluation says that FAO's technical cooperation assistance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has achieved notable results in some technical domains. However, a lack of strategic engagement with the government on national food security policies and priorities has not allowed the country to benefit from the full array of FAO's services.*

With FAO's support, the Kingdom met the requirements for foot-and-mouth disease control under the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases. Consequently, their status was upgraded from stage 1 to stage 2 and there are plans to apply for stage 3 certification, which will enable official recognition and endorsement by the World Organization for Animal Health.

Private sector entrepreneurs, represented by the Saudi Aquaculture Society, said the aquaculture projects were highly beneficial and have enhanced rapid advancement of aquaculture in the country. The projects established good linkages especially with the large-scale investors in cage culture.

The evaluation notes that the cooperation assistance made useful advances in some technical areas over the period 2006–2016. The approach however remained traditional and provided support through a series of independent projects, which were not designed to contribute to larger development objectives. Synergies among the projects as well as collaboration and information exchange among the respective counterpart government entities were missing. Consequently, the strategies, policies, guidelines and protocols developed by individual projects were often not endorsed or adopted.

Capacity development by the projects, which relied heavily on expatriate support, was largely limited to

the training of technical staff with little attention to institutional capacity development or enabling environment.

The evaluation concludes that although the programme has provided a basis for positive and productive relationship between FAO and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it has not contributed sustainably to food security policies and advice, normative work, advocacy and communication, and knowledge sharing.



It therefore recommends that future programme should advance beyond offering ad hoc technical assistance and policy support. It should adopt a programmatic approach that aims to contribute to larger goals like environmental sustainability and rural development in line with the Kingdom's 2030 Vision for Sustainable Development and the Tenth National Development Plan. Greater emphasis should be placed on institutional capacity development, networking and long-term partnerships with national institutions.