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OFFICE OF EVALUATION

Country programme evaluation series

Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to

The Kingdom of Cambodia

SUMMARY REPORT

October 2018

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COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION SERIES

Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia

SUMMARY REPORT

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF EVALUATION**

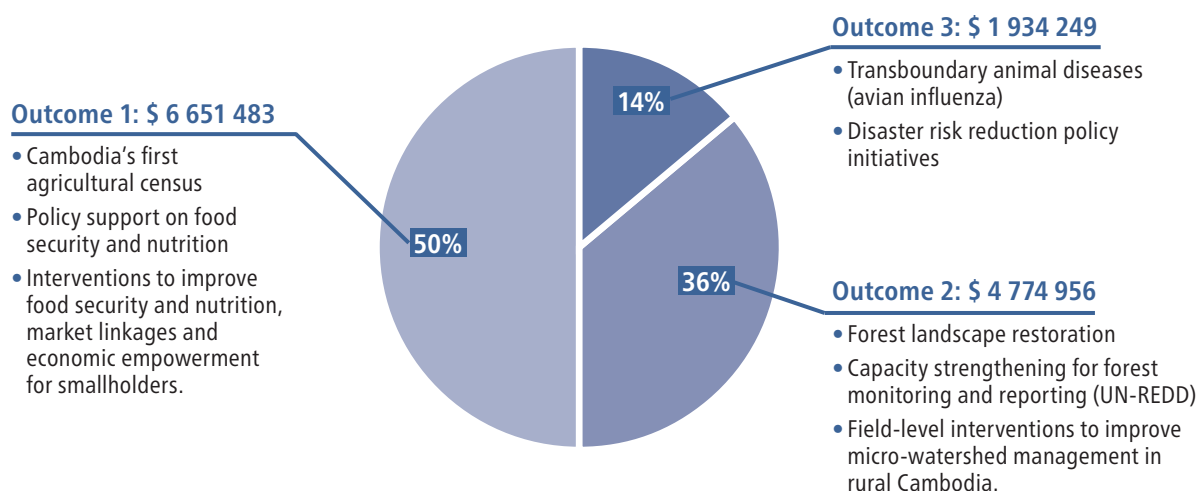
October 2018



Introduction

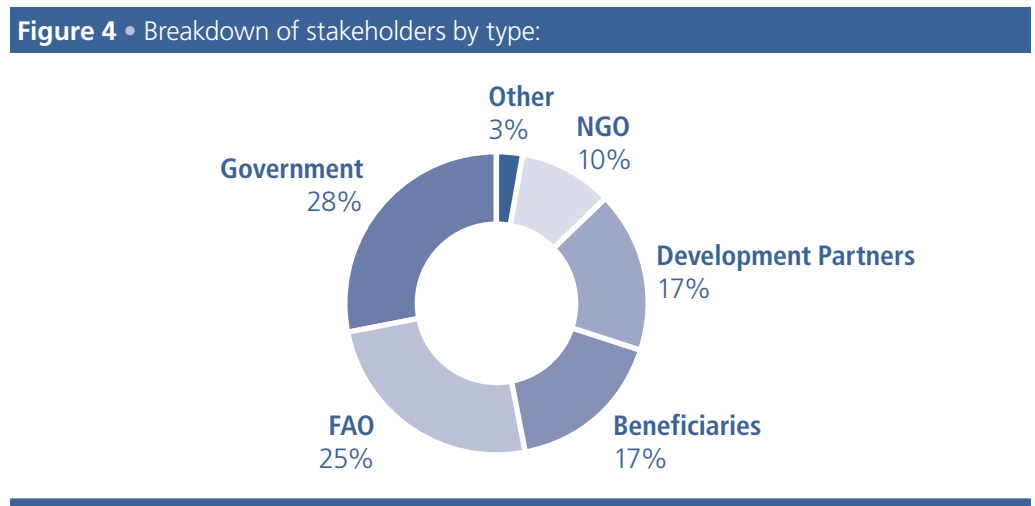
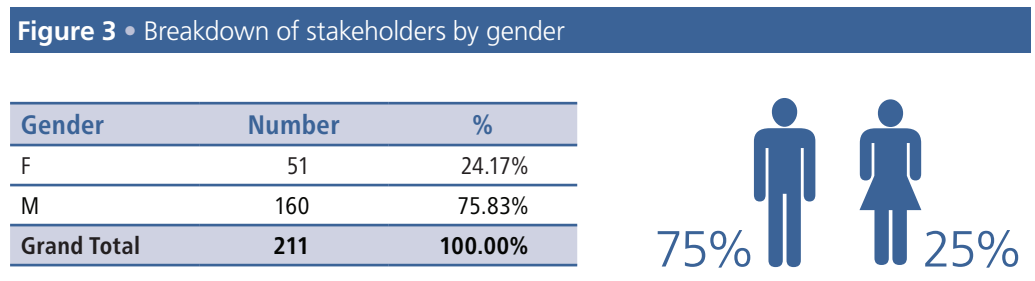
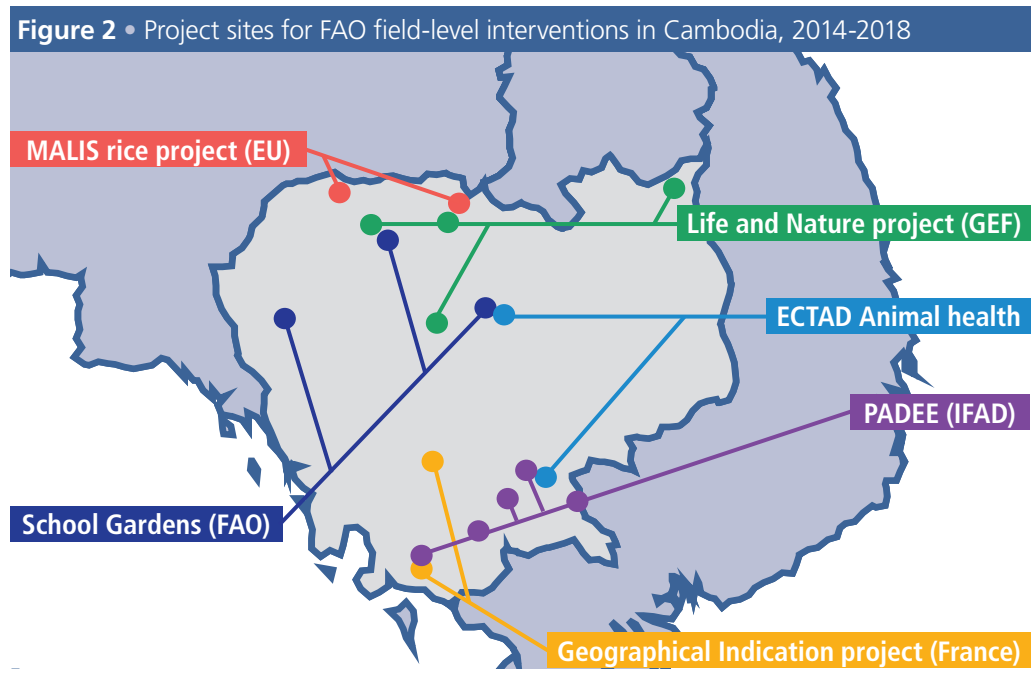
- 1 Cambodia achieved lower middle-income status in 2016, and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has set a target to reach Higher-Middle Income status in 2030 and High Income status in 2050. The country has recorded strong economic growth over the past two decades, with an average growth rate of 7.6 percent for the period 1994-2015, ranking sixth in the world. However, despite the significant reduction in poverty headcounts, the vulnerability or the risk of sliding back into poverty remains high in Cambodia and while Cambodia has achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving poverty in 2009, the vast majority of families who escaped poverty were only able to do so by a small margin. Cambodia is still among the poorest economies in Southeast Asia, with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of USD 1,384 in 2017.
- 2 While Cambodia's rural agrarian population plays an important role in the country's economy, persistent poverty makes many rural households vulnerable to extreme weather events and natural disasters such as tropical cyclones, floods and droughts and rural areas are potentially facing labour shortages as a result of increasing urbanisation. Cambodia's economic transition also places pressure on natural resources: forestland has been gradually declining over the last two decades for multiple reasons, mainly as a result of land conversion and expansion of agriculture, while there are sustainability concerns related to the productivity of capture fisheries and the integrity of fish habitats, crucial for food security in Cambodia.
- 3 In addressing these challenges, the overarching goal of FAO's programme in Cambodia is to contribute to the eradication of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition and to the sustainable management and use of the country's natural resources. The evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Kingdom of Cambodia covers the last five years of the programme, in particular, focusing on the outcomes of the current Country Programming Framework (CPF 2016-2018):
 - Outcome 1: Increased productivity, diversification and commercialization of agriculture, including livestock and aquaculture for poverty reduction and food and nutrition security;
 - Outcome 2: Equitable and sustainable management of natural resources;
 - Outcome 3: Reduction of vulnerability and improved resilience to shocks at national, community and household level.

Figure 1 • Budget delivery in US Dollars by CPF Priority Area (2014 – 2018), estimate



Source: Evaluation team's calculations based on FAO's field programme monitoring information system (FPMIS), accessed July 2018

- 4 The evaluation was conducted throughout 2018 and used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods including 186 structured key informant interviews with beneficiaries, cooperating partner staff, national and local government representatives, United Nations agency representatives, and other key stakeholders in the country portfolio sectors, Structured focus group discussions with project beneficiaries, and an ex-post impact assessment using difference in differences analysis to estimate the outcomes of a Food Security and Market Linkages project implemented by FAO Cambodia from 2012 – 2015.



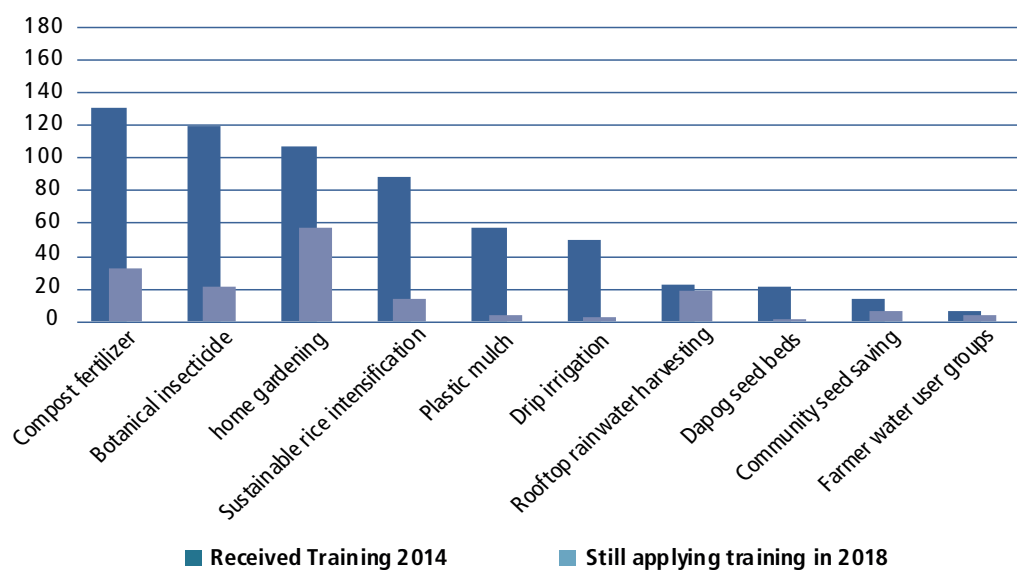
Main Findings

- 5 **The evaluation found that FAO's mandate continues to be of relevance in Cambodia, as the country moves forward on its trajectory to attain middle-income country status by 2030, although FAO has yet to leverage this mandate effectively.** FAO has a key role to play in supporting an inclusive, resilient, efficient and sustainable transformation of the agricultural sector. This does not mean that it needs to try to meet all requests, as this will lead the office down the path again of having too many small fragmented projects to manage. FAO needs to more strongly identify activities that it "wants to do vs what it needs to do".
- 6 **FAO's comparative advantage is clear amongst all stakeholders interviewed – as a trusted purveyor of data and technical advice on matters within its mandate.** On this basis, FAO is widely viewed as a trusted partner of the RGC, and MAFF in particular. There is scope to leverage this position, together with UN system partners, on strengthened advocacy for inclusive and sustainable development, in line with the SDGs/CSDGs. A longer term strategically oriented approach to policy engagement by FAO, in collaboration with other members of the UN country team and backed by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, could provide a way to move away from an ad hoc approach to policy engagement, towards a longer term approach, limiting risks concerned through partnerships with UN country team and other development partners.
- 7 **Stronger efforts are needed to better promote leadership and commitment for the SDGs at national, regional, and local levels to ensure follow-through on international commitments.** Significant changes are underway through the repositioning and reform of the UN development system and the set-up of the UN Country Team. The full implications of these changes for FAO Cambodia and other agencies is not yet clear. What is clear is that all UN systems agencies are mandated to support governments in achieving the SDGs.
- 8 **FAO's role and contributions in relation to coordination of actors working in the agricultural development, One Health, forestry and food security and nutrition sectors is undisputed by stakeholders interviewed.** The technical working groups are seen as a way to bring actors together, but vary in terms of effectiveness and quality of discussions.



"No one is above FAO on technical competencies regarding agricultural techniques"

- Quote from government counterpart

Figure 5 • Number of beneficiary farmers still applying training after four years


Source: CDRI impact study 2018

- 9 **FAO has provided targeted capacity development support in key technical areas**, such as forest monitoring and pesticide risk reduction, and enabling environment support through the development of guidelines, strategies and training manuals; however, further support is needed to enhance implementation capacity to ensure sustainability.
- 10 **Farmers applying improved agricultural practices show increased yields and increased incomes; however, the sustained adoption of improved practices is limited following project closure, with labour constraints commonly cited as a barrier to adoption.** Findings from an impact assessment show that sustainable rice intensification had low uptake by farmers (see Figure 5). Meanwhile, field-level interventions are more sustainable when linked to market chains and value addition. The sustainability of results is further negatively affected by limited capacity and resources for upscaling, and a lack of clear exit strategies.
- 11 **In relation to animal health, FAO has provided leadership and facilitation skills in core policy and technical areas** with the strengthened organization of the animal health services, strengthened legislation, the improved prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases (particularly Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and rabies) and the improved stewardship of antimicrobials. FAO has supported the improved capacity of the National Animal Health and Production Research Institute through the direct support of surveillance programmes and diagnostic testing. Staff training has been provided in laboratory management and diagnostics and epidemiology. Going forward, a strategic plan should be developed to define the competencies, roles and resources required to support and enable village animal health workers in playing a stronger role in the delivery of field services, under critical review and supervision by veterinary staff.
- 12 **There is an insufficient visibility of the lessons of FAO's pilots, and as such there was limited uptake and scaling up of these activities.** Improved monitoring and communication of FAO's results and what it can offer, and a strengthened role as a neutral knowledge broker could serve to amplify its comparative advantage as a provider of technical expertise. Limited monitoring and evaluation of programme activities prevents a clear assessment of results attained by the programme, but some indications can be identified of FAO's influence in national policy instruments adopted by RGC. There have also been strong contributions in support of Integrated Pest Management, Pesticide Risk Reduction and One Health-related interventions, although there are opportunities to have greater input into animal production with better coordination with NGOs and donors working at field level.

- 13 **FAO has taken into account UN normative values and principles such as equity and targeting the most vulnerable communities and localities in the design of its programme but in the implementation of projects, dedicated action plans in support of such objectives, on gender equity for instance, are not evident.** Further training in nutrition and gender for all technical staff would help to increase understanding of how to mainstream nutrition and gender considerations across all parts of the programme.

- 14 **Findings show that targeted interventions for women beneficiaries lead to results.** Participation of female beneficiaries has been strong in field-level projects, and has resulted in positive livelihood changes; although labour constraints and the dynamics of household labour has a negative impact on the sustained adoption of improved agricultural practices by women. While FAO is considered an important entity on gender and agriculture by the MAFF, this perspective is not necessarily shared by donors, who do not view FAO as a gender and nutrition advocate, and highlights a clear need to strengthen outreach by FAO on its contributions and role.



Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Themes to underpin future work – Innovation and Resilience. FAO needs to advocate and support for more investments in research and innovation for resilient food systems to increase sustainability of production and processing, make healthy foods available, and improve employment opportunities.

- 15 There appear to be opportunities for FAO in Cambodia to learn from the transition process from LDC to MIC in the Southeast Asia region with multiple examples available. It will be important for FAOKH to use its global and regional reach, coupled with its intimate knowledge of the Cambodia context to bring to the attention of local stakeholders relevant policy as well as technical innovations from wherever they were developed and support adaption to local use. In particular, Cambodia's ASEAN neighbours represent a good resource, and FAOKH can explore how to better optimize the ASEAN member support structure, and foster engagement with non-traditional partners.
- 16 On climate resilience: there is much need for hands on guidance on how to proceed with Climate Smart Agriculture and FAO has a natural leadership opportunity in this area. At the same time, as Cambodia transitions to more industrialized systems of agricultural production, FAO should ensure that technical guidance continues to be provided and demonstrated on the importance of maintaining ecosystem services and ecosystem biodiversity, while reducing the risks associated with agrochemicals.

Recommendation 2: "Improve market linkages, value addition, and quality and safety of the food system"¹ could be included as a priority in the new country programme.

- 17 FAOKH needs to ensure that future interventions include market linkages, and support to farmers (including fishery and forest products) adopt a value chain approach, including "farming as a business" type capacity development. At the same time, such interventions should seek to enhance results for nutritional aspects of populations concerned.
- 18 Moreover, with a national priority on commercially focused restructuring of the agriculture sector, there is a new emphasis on strengthening food safety through value chain approaches. FAO support can include preparing risk profiles of important value chains, and capacity development and guidance on mitigation, besides risk based control systems, traceability, food safety legislative improvements, regulatory compliance, and food safety communications.

Recommendation 3. In line with its comparative advantage, FAOKH should continue to promote evidence-based policy making to support government investments that are coherent across the food system. The SDGs/CSDGs should serve as the basis for advocacy efforts, accompanied by clear economic arguments and analysis of trade-offs to encourage resonance of these advocacy messages. In the context of UN country reform that emphasizes unified support from system entities, FAO could play a key role in leading such analyses, together with facilitating coordination across the UN system in support of implementation of policies.

¹ For example: Outcome 1 – Markets + food system (as above); Outcome 2 – CC/NRM; Outcome 3 – Resilience – socio-economic, environmental; Outcome 4 – Social protection and FSN

- 19 FAO should also ensure a focus on strengthening capacities to develop evidence bases for informing advocacy messages and policies that includes cost values of policy choices or of policy inaction, for instance in relation to environmental sustainability or deforestation. While the agriculture sector is seen as an engine of growth for the country, government allocations to the sector are inadequate. The inclusion of such analyses in the MAFF budget proposals to MEF could contribute towards strengthening of the sector. Attention should also be directed towards development of such capacities of government at sub-national levels.

Recommendation 4. Building upon a number of actions FAOKH has undertaken in recent years in support of promoting gender equality, the Representation should strengthen its capacity development efforts in line with recommendations identified in a recent country gender assessment. In particular, actions aimed at reducing women's work burden would be timely in view of increasing outmigration from farms.

- 20 Some of the recommendations include: promoting the availability of women's enterprise skills development programmes, addressing the capacity of women to access, use and benefit from new technologies for production, processing, post-harvest and marketing activities, and compiling sex-disaggregated data, reports and other information from various ministries and development partners to encourage learning. There is also still scope for FAO to ensure the design of specific activities that take into consideration the different needs of female and male beneficiaries across its projects, as appropriate.

Recommendation 5. FAO needs to more loudly share lessons from pilot projects and from its experience and expertise. This requires a centralized monitoring and evaluation function, better knowledge management and outreach to make sure the lessons learned from TCPs and pilots are integrated into larger donor-funded projects, even if they will not be implemented by FAO. The TWG could perhaps be utilized more for this purpose.

- 21 Knowledge is a valuable asset. While FAOKH faces challenges in accessing financial resources in a climate of declining ODA, its strength as a technical expert in a country that has ambitious development objectives stands FAO in good stead if it shows clear added value in fulfilling this role. Being a knowledge broker both by strengthening linkages between its pilot projects and its governance/policy support work, and by bringing in timely and innovative global and regional knowledge or models of good practice can support the country's transformation of the agricultural sector.

Recommendation 6. FAOKH needs to ensure adequate expertise is in place for adequate backstopping of large projects, and also to have presence at national platforms and to provide confidence to partners of FAO as a technical agency that they can count on/draw upon.

- 22 International expertise need not be prioritised over national experts. In this regard, FAOKH could explore the new FAO Fellows programme to bring in researchers from academia or research institutes who can bring in expertise in an area, while they benefit from access to FAO activities/data for research that they can publish.
- 23 FAO can provide greater engagement and technical input into animal production and livestock development programmes by increasing in-country technical resources for ECTAD, animal production and fisheries development.



