

Thematic evaluation series

Evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework

ANNEX 1. Terms of Reference

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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1 Introduction

1. The goal of the Terms of Reference is to present the key elements that will shape the proposed evaluation. The document will act as a roadmap for the Evaluation Team and clarify the roles of all stakeholders. The terms of reference present, in order: (i) the background and context of the evaluation; (ii) the purpose and scope of the evaluation; (iii) the subject of the evaluation; (iv) key issues for evaluation; and (v) the design of the evaluation.

2 Background and context

2. In 2013, FAO introduced a new Strategic Framework that presented a renewed vision of its role, along with corresponding programmatic and organizational arrangements. In November 2018, representatives of the FAO Governing Bodies requested “that OED include in its work plan an evaluation of FAO’s Strategic Results Framework to assess the efficiency of the results framework; to assess its effectiveness in supporting the results based management of FAO’s programme of work as an accountability tool; and to identify lessons that can inform the formulation of FAO’s next Strategic Results framework in 2020”.¹
3. This evaluation is the last in a series: each of the SOs was evaluated between 2016 and 2018 and more recently complemented by a Synthesis review. The SO evaluations and synthesis generally established that the Reviewed Strategic Framework enabled FAO to adopt a new way of working, more focused on development outcomes, and confirmed that it broadened FAO’s perspectives and engagement beyond its traditional areas of work. The SOs introduced cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary approaches and conceptual frameworks for FAO’s work, which marked a change from the way the Organization had implemented its work until then. This internal shift in approach has prepared FAO for the cross-sectoral and collaborative thinking required to implement the 2030 Agenda.
4. Major structural changes were undertaken to implement the Strategic Framework, and the Synthesis found that, while the SOs fostered a culture of interdisciplinary work and promoted cross-sectoral and cross-departmental cooperation, the implementation of the Framework was characterized by much learning, adapting and adjusting, at both headquarters and decentralized levels.

¹ Extract from the November 2018 Programme Committee (PC) meeting report (CL 160/3 para 10)

3 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

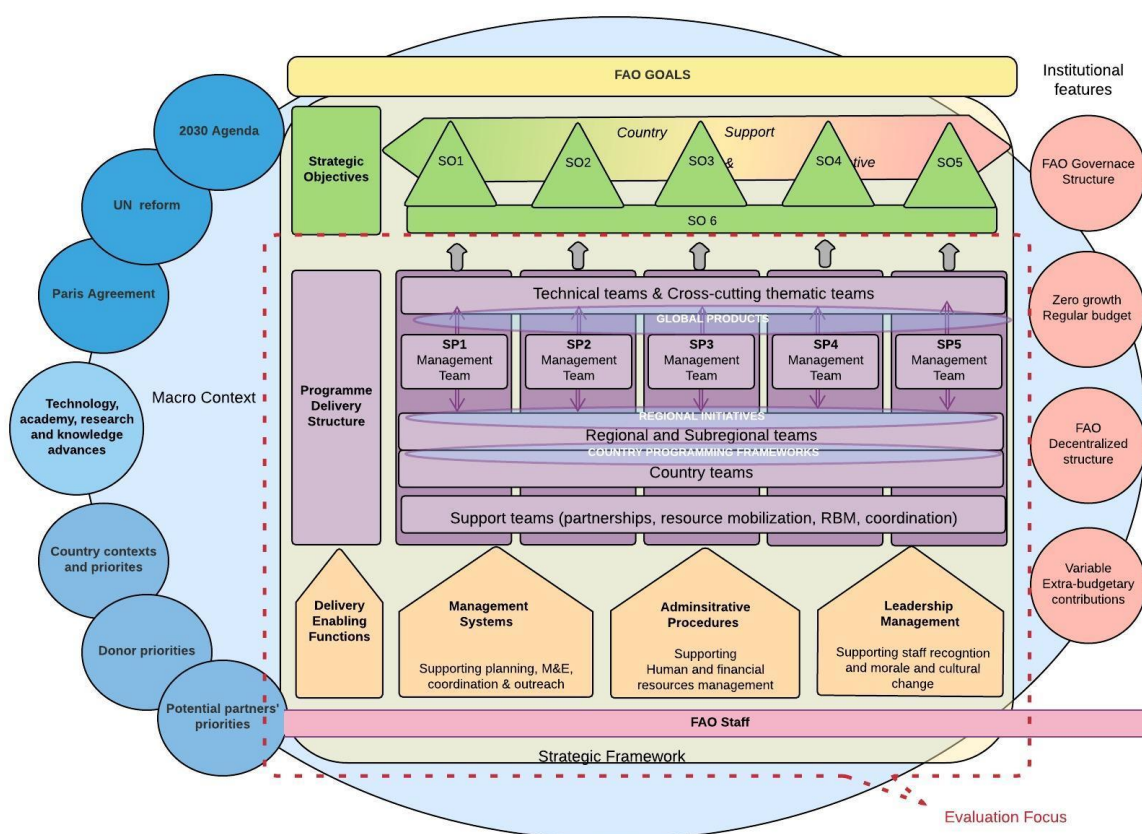
5. The evaluation will serve to complement the recent SO-focused evaluations and bring the focus onto aspects related to the operationalization of the Strategic Framework that cut across all SOs. With the global development agenda and structures having undergone significant changes since 2013, this evaluation will give due attention to the development opportunities and challenges FAO can be expected to encounter from 2020 and to 2030.
6. Against this backdrop, the evaluation will aim to offer evidence-based reflections on the suitability of the components of FAO's Strategic Results framework, to deliver FAO's normative and development missions in line with focused programmatic priorities, and take into account opportunities and challenges fashioned by the global development agenda. More specifically, it will examine the extent to which and how the operational and management arrangements have effectively and efficiently supported the implementation of the vision introduced in 2013. The evaluation will aim to draw lessons from experience to enhance the delivery of its mission.
7. It will look back on the six or so years of Strategic Framework implementation since its introduction in 2013 and examine FAO's work delivery at all levels, from its Country Offices to its headquarters arrangements.

4 Subject of evaluation

4.1 Theory of delivery

8. The focus on the operational aspects behind the delivery of FAO's work is aimed at framing the evaluation around an explicit "theory of delivery" as a starting point for identifying the various elements that go into ensuring effective delivery. Figure 1 shows a simplified visual model created by the Evaluation Team with a view to identifying those elements that affect FAO's ability to deliver on its goals, their respective positioning and the context in which they evolve. This "theory of delivery" may facilitate the evaluation of those elements and, thus, support the framing of evaluation questions. It may evolve during the evaluation process, as the Evaluation Team takes on board comments from stakeholders to refine its accuracy.

Figure 1: A visual representation of the FAO delivery model under the Strategic Framework



9. Figure 1 presents a simplified vision of FAO's Strategic Framework and its external influences. It recognizes the importance of the macro-level context in which FAO operates, which shapes the margins of FAO's vision and strategy. FAO's commitments to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement define its highest-levels goals in terms of development and climate change, while UN Reform shapes FAO's modalities of operation at country level, thus influencing its delivery model. It is important to underscore the duality of FAO's goals and governance structure, both normative and developmental, as an element of management complexity. FAO's decentralized structure and its limited and partly unpredictable resources base, although not an integral part of the Strategic Framework, are further important influences to acknowledge. The theory of delivery aims to reflect the

Strategic Framework's drive for greater focus based on programmatic axes that synthesize FAO's global knowledge and country support with a view to positioning FAO more strategically towards external stakeholders such as investors and governments. It offers a possible representation of FAO's mission, defined around five programmatic SOs and a transversal SO6, and served by a matrix-type management structure and institutional enabling functions.

10. The Strategic Objectives Evaluations and Synthesis largely recognized the relevance of this programmatic vision. This new evaluation will focus on the delivery model (see the dotted red line in Figure 1), assessing whether and how the operationalization has supported the transformation of this vision into effective results. It will entail reflecting on experience to date to identify components of the delivery model and change management processes that may need attention, to improve delivery against this vision.

4.2 Relevant findings from previous evaluations and reviews

11. As mentioned, the Synthesis of Findings and Lessons Learnt from the Strategic Objectives Evaluations confirmed the relevance of the new programmatic vision set out in the Strategic Framework and found that it had helped foster a culture of cross-departmental cooperation and inter-disciplinary work. The synthesis also identified a number of challenges and constraints that the Organization is facing in implementing its Strategic Framework, which will be analysed in greater depth in this new evaluation. These challenges mainly relate to the following areas:

- Constraints related to the balance and distribution of skills and technical capacity;
- While recognizing that resource mobilization arrangements have evolved under the new Strategic Framework, with the adoption of a resource mobilization strategy and a centrally coordinated approach to avoid multiple and conflicting messaging, the synthesis stressed the need for the UN system, including FAO, to step up engagement with alternative sources of finance, including the private sector, to achieve the SDGs. At its 126th session in March 2019, the Programme Committee "concurred with the Synthesis on the need to strengthen FAO's catalytic role in increasing investment in sustainable food and agriculture and the suggestion to use investment leverage as an important indicator of its impact, necessitating an increase in FAO's resource mobilization, from extra budgetary resources, and consider alternative financing instruments, such as blended finance and impact investments, in addition to its traditional finance partners";²
- Challenges related to conceptual issues in defining, monitoring and reporting results; and
- The transaction and opportunity costs of operational and administrative procedures and the need to create a more enabling environment. Although these factors are not rooted in the Strategic Framework, they have an impact on effective implementation and should be further analysed.

12. Based on the finding of the Synthesis, the Programme Committee also requested this evaluation to provide concrete suggestions on the following aspects:

- quality of the results framework;
- adequacy of the matrix management structure;
- appropriateness of planning, monitoring and reporting systems;

² Report of the 126th Session of the Programme Committee (CL 161/3). Rome, 18–22 March 2019

- appropriateness of indicators to capture development effectiveness;
- appropriateness of outcome assessment methodology; and
- effectiveness of institutional, administrative and operational procedures.

MOPAN 2017-18 Assessment of FAO Performance

The MOPAN assessment, published in 2019, identified key strengths and areas of improvement of FAO's work.

Key strengths were:

- FAO has established a clear, compelling and focused strategic vision that bodes well for the future.
- FAO demonstrates strong commitment to working in partnerships.
- The refocusing of FAO's strategic direction has fostered a more integrated, multidisciplinary way of working.
- FAO has established sound, high-quality financial management systems and improved its systems of internal control.

Areas for improvement were the following:

- FAO has paid insufficient attention to strategic risk management.
- The way in which FAO implemented recent reforms in human resources bears risks.
- The timeliness of FAO's administrative and operational processes for delivery needs further attention.
- FAO's corporate results framework gives insufficient visibility to the organization's crucial normative work.
- Corporate performance reporting is not sufficiently integrated and complete.

<http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/fao2017-18/FAO%20Report.pdf>

5 Key issues to be addresses by the evaluation

13. Building from the findings of previous studies and taking into account the requests of the FAO governing bodies, the evaluation will focus on four main areas of inquiry:

5.1 Question 1: To what extent does the results framework provide an appropriate structure for planning, delivering and reporting FAO results in the context of the Agenda 2030 and UN reform?

5.1.1 To what extent does the results framework support FAO in delivering country and global development outcomes?

- i. Does the results framework facilitate FAO's contributions to country priorities and SDGs, and support FAO's readiness to engage into new country-level UNDAFs?
- ii. What is the contribution of CPFs and Regional Initiatives to the results framework?
- iii. Has the results framework given adequate consideration and visibility to the normative work of FAO?
- iv. What pathways exist to ensure synergies and complementarities between FAO's country development and global normative outcomes?
- v. Has the results framework demonstrated itself to be adaptive to Country Offices' needs and to have effectively supported more programmatic planning?

5.1.2 Have indicators and methodologies adequately captured development effectiveness?

- i. Do results framework indicators adequately capture FAO's work at country level, as well as its normative and standard-setting work?
- ii. To what extent is there clarity on the mutual accountability compact and data management with counterparts?
- iii. Is the Corporate Outcome Assessment methodology appropriate to reporting on results?

5.2 Question 2: In what way have programme and organizational structure and the supporting system offered a suitable delivery architecture for FAO's strategic vision?

5.2.1 Has the (matrix) structure been appropriately conceptualized and designed to respond to corporate management needs?

- i. To what extent are roles and responsibilities adequately distributed, backed by decision-making power (resources) and clear, from (and within) headquarters to Regional, Sub-regional and Country Offices?
- ii. Has there been an improvement in the quality and mix of skills that FAO has been able to mobilize to foster more programmatic and strategic country programmes? How effective have "focus country" and "active observation country" been in this regard?
- iii. Is there appropriate coordination between each function (programme, technical, etc.) from (and within) headquarters to Country Offices?
- iv. How effective have Strategic Framework governance mechanisms been?

5.2.2 To what extent do management systems for work planning, monitoring, reporting and knowledge exchange support effective implementation?

- i. To what extent are work-planning procedures adequately supporting the effective delivery of FAO's programmes, in particular:
 - Do they facilitate the integration of FAO's work within the SDG framework and under the one-UN system at Country Office level?
 - Do they demonstrate adequate flexibility to adapt to country realities?
 - Are they adequate to plan for, monitor and report on FAO's technical work?
 - What has been the impact of Regional Initiatives on FAO's country-oriented and normative missions?
 - To what extent do the work-planning procedures facilitate collaboration across organizational units for the achievement of results in the current and future biennia?
- ii. To what extent do monitoring and reporting mechanisms support programme quality? In particular:
 - Do they facilitate monitoring and reporting on FAO's actual results?
 - To what extent and how is knowledge used for learning and improving (programmes and the results framework)?
- iii. How adequate are information management systems in supporting the required information exchange?

5.2.3 To what extent has FAO's resource mobilization model supported the vision of the Strategic Framework?

- i. To what extent do resource mobilization strategies maximize the potential for integrating work funded from the voluntary and assessed contributions?
- ii. How does FAO plan to engage in the transition from funding to financing?

5.3 Question 3: How effectively and efficiently have institutional management procedures and staff management supported the integrated delivery of FAO's missions?

5.3.1 To what extent have administrative rules and procedures enabled the effective delivery of FAO's missions?

- i. To what extent has HR management been effective and supported by appropriate policies and efficient procedures?
- ii. To what extent have procurement and travel policies and procedures effectively and efficiently supported the delivery of FAO programmes?

5.3.2 Has adequate attention been paid to managing FAO staff's adoption of the newly introduced approaches?

- i. Has adequate attention been paid to managing change?
- ii. How adequate were efforts to ensure staff ownership and buy-in of the Strategic Framework?

14. The evaluation will take into account all elements influencing the implementation of the strategic framework, including those that do not immediately depend on its introduction, but rather form part of the wider FAO reform process that has been underway over the same period. This is the case, for example, with the decentralization process and overall HR reforms.

6 Evaluation design and organization

15. In line with its purpose, the evaluation will follow an objective-based approach, namely, to examine whether and how FAO's Strategic Framework has been implemented and any eventual unintended results against its broader strategic intent, objectives and design. It will focus on understanding the transformation pathways and achievements along the proposed results chain and seek to generate lessons and recommendations for better performance.

6.1 Methodology and tools

16. The evaluation findings will build on a mix of methods and tools, starting with a **desk-based review of secondary information**. As various evaluations and reviews conducted in recent years have produced a substantial amount of relevant information, the evaluation should aim to make use of available data as a starting point. The evaluation will draw on information about FAO's internal processes from the recent SO evaluations and MOPAN report, as well as FAO internal documentation, and review other literature and data for management and operational benchmarks. Secondary data will form the basis for an initial hypothesis and stakeholder consultations. This will reduce the burden on FAO staff, already asked to contribute on several occasions on related themes. The Evaluation Team will seek to strike the correct balance between managing evaluation fatigue and engaging staff to maximize utility.
17. The evaluators will then **gather perceptions and additional data from FAO stakeholders** to fill information gaps and validate the initial hypothesis. The design of the evaluation acknowledges that FAO's mission is, on the one hand, development- and country-oriented and, on the other, normative and global. These are mutually complementary and neither subsumes the other. The evaluation will aim to gather the perspectives of FAO staff contributing to each of these missions. This will include ensuring adequate representation of Country and Regional Office perspectives through **virtual consultations and missions**.
18. The evaluation will use two main methods to gather information from FAO staff:
 - **Semi-structured interviews** with selected FAO staff from Country, Sub-regional, Regional or headquarters offices. The selection of staff to be interviewed will be criteria based. The evaluation will ensure wide consultation in decentralized offices, where past evaluations may have had fewer interactions.
 - **Focus-group discussions** in headquarters and at regional level (with FAORs invited where possible) for collaborative reflection on the Strategic Framework in relation to: (i) its appropriateness to contextual drivers (SDGs, UN reform, investment agenda, etc.); (ii) its delivery structure and systems effectiveness; (iii) the institutional effectiveness of enabling processes (HR, procedures, etc.); (iv) the identified challenges and good practices.
19. For topics calling for a particular investment in information exchange, the evaluators may request relevant teams to nominate **focal points**, who may engage more directly in the evaluation process, offering regular feedback informed by their in-depth knowledge of a certain area of work and general understanding of the Organization.
20. The evaluation will also **consult outside FAO**, to seek external validation and learning opportunities from alternative approaches and practices in organizations that pursue similar objectives and gather the perceptions of partner, counterparts, donors and Member representatives. For instance, the evaluation will interview institutions that could share

useful insights from their experiences with matrix management or organizational change (such as the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development).

6.2 Roles and responsibilities

21. The evaluation will be managed and led by OED, with substantial contributions from independent consultant experts.
22. **OED**, in particular, the Evaluation Manager and the Assistant Evaluation manager, is responsible for the evaluation's terms of reference, the identification of the evaluation team members and the final report. The Evaluation Manager will brief the Evaluation Team on the evaluation methodology and process and review the final draft report for quality assurance purposes with regard to presentation, compliance with the terms of reference and timely delivery, quality, clarity and soundness of the evidence provided and of the analysis supporting the conclusions and recommendations. OED also has a responsibility to follow up with FAO programme stakeholders and the Evaluation Reference Group to facilitate the timely preparation of the Management Response and the follow-up to it.
23. **Evaluation Team** members are responsible for providing inputs into the evaluation design and for leading the analysis in defined areas of inquiry, as identified with the Evaluation Manager during the inception phase. All team members will participate in relevant meetings, discussions and missions and will contribute to the evaluation with written inputs to the draft and final report. The evaluation team and the Evaluation Manager will agree on the outline of the report early in the evaluation process, based on the guidance provided by OED.
24. **FAO stakeholders** will engage in the entire evaluation process. In particular, they will provide inputs to the preparation and terms of reference, support the Evaluation Team in its inquiries, including with information and documentation, participate in meetings with the Evaluation Team and comment on the draft report. The extent of the engagement of the respective programme stakeholders will depend on their roles in relation to the main themes of the evaluation. Stakeholders will include: (i) FAO senior managers and selected staff whose roles make them relevant informants, whether located in Country, Sub-regional or Regional Offices or headquarters; (ii) Permanent Representatives of FAOs Governing Bodies on the Programme Committee; and (iii) partner institutions of FAO, be they from the development sphere, public or private sectors.

6.3 Deliverables

25. The evaluation will deliver a **report** for consideration by the Programme Committee at its 127th session in November 2019. The evaluation report will address the sub-questions and the conclusions will answer the main questions. Drafting the report will be a main responsibility of the Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Team members will provide substantial contributions, as agreed during the evaluation inception phase. It will include an executive summary and illustrate the evidence found that responds to the evaluation questions listed in the terms of reference, with numbered paragraphs, following the OED template for report writing. Annexes to the report will present supporting data and analysis when considered important to complement the main report. Translations into other languages of the Organization, if required, will be FAO's responsibility. Key stakeholders in the evaluation will comment on the draft evaluation report.
26. In line with a recommendation formulated by the Programme Committee in its 125th session, in November 2018, the report will present the assessment results against key evaluation questions with an accompanying rating system.

6.4 Organization of the evaluation

27. The evaluation will follow the following phases:

Design and inception: February to mid-April

- Review, organization and synthesis of secondary data and inception meetings – February–March
- Evaluation design and organization – March to mid-April
- Agreement on terms of reference – April
- Preparation of evaluation terms of reference with inputs from FAO stakeholders – by mid-April

Data collection and processing: mid-April to June

- Preparation of structured analytical pieces on various areas of inquiry, based on the secondary data, to serve as the initial hypothesis – April
- Reviews by independent experts on matrix management and institutional efficiency – April–May
- FAO and external stakeholder consultations to validate, refine and complement initial hypothesis, through interviews, focus-group discussions or participatory workshops in FAO headquarters, virtually and through missions to decentralized offices – May–June
- Team analysis meeting and presentation of preliminary findings to the Reference Group in FAO headquarters, Rome – end June

Analysis, write-up and presentation: July to September

- Report drafting – July–August
- Presentation and discussion of preliminary findings with FAO stakeholders – by mid-September
- Report finalization upon receipt of comments (three rounds) – by end-September
- Presentation of findings to governing bodies (FAO headquarters, Rome) – 4–8 November