Evaluation of FAO’s contribution to Georgia
2016-2019
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## Acronyms and abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>CPF</td>
<td>Country Programming Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENPARD</td>
<td>European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development for Georgia</td>
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<td>EBRD</td>
<td>European Bank for Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
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<td>IPM</td>
<td>Integrated pest management</td>
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<td>MEPA</td>
<td>Ministry of the Environmental Protection and Agriculture</td>
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<td>NFA</td>
<td>National Food Agency</td>
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<td>NAITS</td>
<td>National Animal Identification Traceability System</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>SADG</td>
<td>Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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Executive summary

1 Georgia has been a Member of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) since 1995. In 2004, FAO strengthened its presence there by making the FAO Subregional Representative for Central and Eastern Europe the FAO Representative in Georgia and establishing a fully-fledged representation in Tbilisi. FAO is supporting national development priorities to create and implement an institutional, legal and regulatory environment, as well as lending technical assistance on key projects at the Government’s request. It is working to strengthen Georgia’s institutional disaster-management capacity and helping to align Government policies with European structures and standards, so as to fuel economic growth.

2 The purpose of the Georgia Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) is to provide feedback that will better orient FAO’s programme and boost the impact and resonance of the next Country Programming Framework (CPF). It seeks to contribute to learning at corporate, regional and country level by drawing lessons and making recommendations to steer FAO’s engagement there. It will also enrich FAO’s synthesis of findings and guidance for country-level support.

3 This evaluation aims to assess the totality of FAO’s assistance to Georgia, irrespective of the source of funding. It is focused on assessing FAO’s contributions to development results in the priority areas set out in the CPF, which covers the period from 2016 to 2020. The evaluation is timed to feed into the preparation of a new CPF, which will be formulated from 2020 in consultation with national stakeholders. It examines four CPF priority areas—institutional development, regional and sectoral development (value-chain development), food safety, veterinary and plant protection, and climate change, environment and biodiversity – and covers cross-cutting issues such as gender, governance, climate-change adaptation and nutrition.

4 The evaluation drew on a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, based on the resources available. The Evaluation Team conducted a range of focus-group discussions and key informant interviews with beneficiaries, national and local government representatives, United Nations agency representatives, funding partners and other key public and private stakeholders.

5 The World Bank classes Georgia as a lower-middle-income country. In 2018, 39 percent of the economically active population was engaged in agriculture, with slightly less than half living in rural areas. Still, agriculture accounts for just 8 percent or so of total economic value added. Both urban and rural areas have benefited from continuous economic growth since 2010, as well as from the Government’s social policies and new economic opportunities. Still, poverty rates in rural areas are higher than in urban areas.

6 There is a preponderance of women among unpaid workers. There is a significant gender gap when it comes to technical and professional expertise on agriculture and rural development, and women’s access to innovation, knowledge and technology, as well as a gender pay gap that is hampering economic growth. Youth unemployment has been around 30 percent since 2007; with more young women out of work than young men. The Government has reviewed the national legislative frameworks and has developed policies on gender equality over the past two decades, but enforcement and monitoring of these laws and policies remains challenging.

7 Nearly half of Georgia’s territory is agricultural land, including pastures and meadows; some 40 percent of the country is forest. The country’s significant agricultural potential is constrained by low productivity and insufficient development of extension services and value chains. What’s more, the sector is highly vulnerable to outbreaks of animal disease and pests. The Government has prioritized agricultural development and the alleviation of rural poverty in its Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia (SADG) 2015–2020, which emphasizes the growth of high-value-added agricultural and food exports where the country has a comparative advantage.
Developing efficient and flexible systems in food safety, veterinary and plant protection and their approximation and compliance with European Union regulations and standards is a top priority for the Government and features strongly in the SADG. The country has a high degree of exposure to transboundary animal diseases, which in addition to posing direct risk to agriculture and people, affects the country’s engagement in external agricultural trade.

**Message 1.** The Evaluation found FAO’s programme to be strongly aligned with Georgia’s national development priorities, providing relevant technical and policy advice on strategic priorities and issues and effective in its response to government needs and support for the reform agenda. FAO needs to maintain this strategic engagement, with an emphasis on interventions to address Georgia’s lack of institutional and human-resource capacity.

**Message 2.** FAO has made significant contributions to the formulation and development of crucial legal and institutional frameworks, policies, strategies and plans for advancing the development of Georgia’s agricultural sector. Its downstream work on policy and strategy implementation has been less effective, however, and FAO needs to identify approaches that promote a shift from policy and institutional development to practical application in the field, focusing on areas that offer the potential for real, concrete results.

**Message 3.** In most FAO programmes, the sustainability of results is affected by a number of factors, not least continued policy change and institutional reform and a lack of human and financial resources in relevant national institutions. To ensure longer-term sustainability, FAO needs to integrate clear sustainability and exit strategies into its programmes and interventions.

**Message 4.** FAO needs to step up its work to address potential risks and vulnerabilities in the areas of agricultural and rural development. It should continue to support plant protection and animal health. It should also focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged rural populations, promoting the integration of gender considerations, emphasizing climate-change adaptation and environmental sustainability, and addressing elements of biodiversity.

FAO needs to increase its efforts to promote good agricultural practices, biodiversity and the sustainable management of natural resources. As it has core technical expertise on the major threats to Georgia’s biodiversity and habitat (such as logging, degradation of water ecosystems and intensive grazing), it needs to integrate these issues into country programming.

**Message 5.** FAO plays a leading role in coordinating actors in the areas of agricultural development and food safety and security. It needs to capitalize on these opportunities to address urgent and important issues, enhance its cooperation with other development agencies in the country and lead the pooling of resources to achieve common objectives in priority areas.
1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The Country Programming Framework (CPF) is the principal instrument that defines the development priorities for collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Government, and are a means for FAO to be accountable to the Government and non-government partners and resource partners in the country, as well as all Member Nations. The purpose of the Georgia Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) is to provide feedback to better orient FAO’s programme, to contribute towards the impact and resonance of the next CPF. It seeks to contribute to learning at corporate, regional and country levels by drawing lessons and making recommendations that will be useful for FAO’s future engagement in the country. Besides providing lessons specifically on FAO’s work in Georgia, the evaluation will also enrich FAO’s synthesis of findings and guidance for its country level support.

2 The specific objectives of the CPE are to:

i. assess the strategic relevance of FAO’s interventions in responding to country needs;
ii. assess FAO’s contributions to results in areas identified in the CPF priority areas;
iii. identify lessons learned as well as enabling and limiting factors for results;
iv. identify gaps in FAO’s country programming and potential areas of future work.
1.2 **Scope and objective of the evaluation**

This evaluation aims at assessing the totality of the FAO assistance provided to the country, irrespective of the source of funding. This includes activities funded through the regular programme as well as extra-budgetary resources; national, regional and global projects and initiatives; emergency and development interventions. The evaluation is focused on assessing FAO’s contributions to development results in the priority areas defined in the CPF.

The current CPF covers the period from 2016 to 2020, and this evaluation is timed to feed into the preparation of a new country programming framework, which is to be formulated from 2020 in consultation with relevant national stakeholders. The evaluation examines the four CPF priority areas and also covers the cross-cutting issues such as gender, governance, climate change adaptation and nutrition.

1.3 **Methodology**

The evaluation used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods taking into consideration resources available. The team conducted structured focus group discussions key informant interviews with beneficiaries, national and local government representatives, United Nations agency representatives, funding partners and other key stakeholders.
1. Introduction

Three national experts have been assigned to lead analysis of results pertaining to three Priority Areas. Priority Area 4 was assessed jointly by all team members. The team met with 67 persons, including: FAO staff at headquarters, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU), country office and project teams, Government representatives, development partners, United Nations Country Team representatives, representatives from the private sector, civil society and academia, and farmers.

1.4 Limitations

The evaluation relied on qualitative sources such as stakeholder perceptions, observations and programme activity reports. Owing to the difficulties in accessing some project sites (e.g. in Abkhazia), the team conducted interviews with staff responsible for related programme activities, and relied on monitoring data available.

1.5 Structure of the report

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the background and development context of the project. Chapter 3 focuses on FAO’s strategic positioning, while FAO’s contributions are presented in Chapter 4. Lastly, conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 5.
2. Background and development context

2.1 Context

According to the World Bank, Georgia is a lower middle-income country with an average GDP per capita estimated at USD 4,068 in 2017. Current ‘Human Development Index’ score is 0.780. In 2018, 39 percent of the economically active population of Georgia was engaged in agriculture with slightly less than half living in rural areas. Employment in agriculture stands at 34 percent nationwide, while it contributes only just about 8 percent of total value-added in the economy. Both urban and rural areas have benefited from continuous economic growth since 2010 and benefited considerably from the Government’s social policies, as well as from new economic opportunities, yet poverty rates in rural areas are higher than in urban areas.

Women are overrepresented as unpaid workers and there is a significant gender gap in technical and professional expertise on agriculture and rural development, women’s access to innovation, knowledge and technology as well as gender pay gap hindering economic growth. Youth unemployment has been around 30 percent since 2007 with that for young women being higher than for young men. The Government of Georgia reviewed the national legislative frameworks and developing policies in gender equality over the last two decades. However, enforcement and monitoring of these laws and policies remains a challenge.

Nearly half the territory of Georgia is agricultural land, including pastures and meadows, with 40 percent of the territory covered by forests. Agriculture’s significant potential is being constrained by low productivity and insufficient development of extension services and value chains. Besides, the sector is highly vulnerable to outbreaks of animal diseases and pests. Since 2012, the Government has prioritized steps towards promoting agricultural development and alleviating rural poverty through the implementation of the Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia. The Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020 (SADG) emphasizes expansion of high value added agricultural and food exports where the country has a comparative advantage.

In 2014, the European Union and Georgia signed an Association Agreement (AA) with the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which is expected to bring economic benefits to Georgia by providing access to the European Union’s single market. The European Union started to assist the Government in its reforms, helping to upgrade goods and industries to the necessary level. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) has the leading role in policymaking and strategic directions related to agricultural development that is expected to play one of the key roles as a strong poverty-compensating factor for a highly vulnerable share of population.

Developing efficient and flexible systems in food safety, veterinary and plant protection and their approximation and compliance with the European Union regulations and standards is a top priority for the Government and in the SADG. The country has a high degree of exposure to transboundary animal diseases which, besides causing direct risks to agriculture and people, also affects the country’s engagement in external trade in agricultural products. Regional, sectorial and value chain development have also an outstanding importance in the process of European Union integration. Georgia’s growth potential could be enhanced by improving access to finance and markets and facilitating innovation. While Georgia has significantly improved its position in the Doing Business 2019 report of the World Bank, coming in sixth place out of 190 countries, access to finance remains a constraint, especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Poverty declined from 32.5 percent in 2006 to 16.3 percent in 2017.
2.2 FAO programme

Georgia has been a Member State of FAO since 1995. In 2004, the Organization strengthened its presence in the country by accrediting the FAO Subregional Representative for Central and Eastern Europe as FAO Representative in Georgia and establishing a fully-fledged Representation in Tbilisi. FAO’s assistance to the country’s national development priorities comprises of creating and implementing an institutional, legal and regulatory environment as well as technical assistance in a form of project requests made by or through the Government. In this regard, FAO helps the Government to adjust policies for a progressive integration into European structures and standards that aims at promoting an intense economic growth in the country. In addition, the Organization assists in strengthening Georgia’s institutional disaster management capacities in terms of disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response.

FAO Georgia plays an active role in coordination amongst development partners and provides the secretarial support to the Animal Health Steering Committee comprised of government institutions, implementers and donors. FAO is also the lead development partner facilitator for the Stakeholder Committee of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development for Georgia (ENPARD Georgia) established in 2013.
2. Background and development context

2.3 Overview of FAO’s field programme

Over the evaluation period (2016-2020), total delivery of FAO’s programme in Georgia is estimated at USD 11,776,321. The delivery is undertaken by 19 country projects, as well as 4 regional projects. As reported in Figure 1, annual delivery of technical cooperation programme has seen a slight decline in recent years, following a spike in 2015 due to an increase in spending for the first project of ENPARD I. Since then FAO secured funding and started implementation of the two large projects in current CPF: the establishment of a National Animal Identification, Registration and Traceability Systems (NAITS) and the ENPARD III which started in 2017 and 2018, respectively. Delivery of emergency projects have been experiencing a gradual decline and currently there are no emergency funding in FAO’s programme in Georgia.

The European Union has been the largest donor for FAO Georgia in the period from 2016 to 2020, followed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Austria Development Agency (ADA) - see Figure 2. SDC provides support most notably on the establishment of the (NAITS). ADA supports the ENPARD programme through a project on capacity development of the MEPA for an effective implementation of the SADG and contributes to a plant protection through the national programme for rehabilitation of seed production. FAO itself contributes the fourth largest share of project funds, with over USD 2.2 million.

The largest share (41 percent) of the total budget of FAO’s programme in Georgia over the evaluation period concentrated resources under Outcome 1 (strengthened capacity of MEPA for improved policy decision-making and programme implementation). FAO’s work in this area included ongoing policy support in agriculture and food security through development and implementation of SADG and the Rural Development Strategy of Georgia (RDSG). The second largest (25 percent) concentration of financial resources was in Outcome 3 (food safety, veterinary and plant protection). FAO’s work under this outcome focused on effective traceability and vaccination of animals, pest monitoring and forecast as well as an improved cattle breeding and seed production. Outcomes 2 on value chain development and Outcome 4 on climate change adaptation and biodiversity accounted for 17 percent of the resources. Under these outcomes, FAO worked on agricultural extension, value chain policy and grant schemes development as well as sustainable forest and wildlife management.
3. Assessment of FAO’s strategic positioning

3.1 Strategic relevance

Finding 1. FAO’s programme in Georgia has been designed to respond to the country’s development needs and national objectives focusing on the reform and development of the agricultural sector, increased production of high quality agricultural products, and sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas to address rural poverty.

The main thrust of the FAO country programme in Georgia was found to be highly responsive to the national priorities. This support is perceived by key stakeholders as crucial, consistent and well-aligned with the pace of national efforts in developing the agricultural sector and stimulating rural development. Many stakeholders expressed their views that FAO’s policy advice and commitment to offer its assistance in developing national strategy and related policy and institutional frameworks, have been instrumental in convincing the Government to pay more attention to this sector, as compared to the situation before 2012, when the agricultural sector was not viewed as a potential contributor towards economic growth development, and hence not viewed as a key national priority.

The emphasis of the current programme henceforth reflects FAO’s continuous leading role in supporting new government approach towards agricultural sector development, with four Priority Areas of the FAO Country Programming Framework directly corresponding to the key strategic directions of the Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020. In view of this new approach, the Government has been increasingly requesting relevant support from FAO and other actors in providing essential policy advice, technical support and capacity building in the development of the legal, normative and institutional frameworks for agricultural sector reform and development policy and rural development, and strengthening extension and advisory services to facilitate rehabilitation of rural areas and promoting agriculture.

Finding 2. FAO programme has also provided critical support resolving urgent and challenging priorities and issues, and addressing vulnerabilities and risks.

National stakeholders commended FAO’s ability to provide quick and effective solutions in addressing emerging challenges and risks, such as outbreaks of the animal diseases or spread of pests. FAO has been instrumental in addressing the high degree of the country exposure to transboundary animal diseases, assisting in reducing the incidence of brucellosis in susceptible animal populations and providing recommendations for strengthening the veterinary services system. Acting upon FAO’s recommendations, the Georgian government has prioritized and begun investing in preventive measures, implementing its national brucellosis control strategy and plans to control the Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) and the Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD). FAO provided training in brucellosis, PPR and LSD control and prevention to veterinarians and laboratory technicians and continues its assistance to the National Food Agency (NFA) in conducting a vaccination campaign and training. While effective prevention measures will take time, FAO’s efforts were perceived to be crucial in addressing the threats to animal health.

FAO has effectively led and facilitated efforts in eliminating threats from invasive species, such as fall webworm, erwinia amylovora, and assisted the government in developing integrated pest management (IPM) system, strengthening the national phytosanitary system by establishing electronic phytosanitary certification, identification of pests and monitoring. FAO helped to identify strengths and weaknesses of the country’s phytosanitary system and supported key measures to facilitate implementation of the
International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) as well as other international obligations related to phytosanitary measures. A pilot agrometeorological system aiming to reduce the spread of diseases and use of chemicals was piloted in Georgia’s Kakheti region.

Finding 3. FAO country programme was well aligned with FAO’s Strategic Objectives, and made important contributions towards SDGs nationalization processes.

The evaluation found that the FAO programme is well aligned with FAO’s Strategic Objectives, with results reported under all Strategic Objectives except for Strategic Objective 1. The work on introducing good agricultural practices, climate-smart agriculture and community forestry is in direct alignment with Strategic Objective 2. FAO’s work in Georgia has contributed to Strategic Objective 3 through support in re-establishing rural institutions, and focusing on livelihoods of the most vulnerable population. The focus of FAO’s work on empowering smallholders and farms, and developing concepts and practical models of agricultural cooperatives is relevant to Strategic Objective 4, and FAO’s activities on addressing the issues of plant and animal health contributed to the Strategic Objective 5.

According to the Government, UN agencies and other partners, FAO contributed to the SDG nationalization process in Georgia. Being a custodian agency for 21 SDG indicators, FAO has a recognized expertise to guide this process by increasing awareness about SDGs and supporting SDG monitoring. This support was very relevant in view of limited knowledge of SDG nationalization and related monitoring. Two projects were designed to support SDG implementation: Support to the Ministry of Agriculture in SDG implementation and monitoring (TCP/GEO/3604/C3) and support to MEPA in implementation of SDG action plan (TCP/GEO/3702/C2), which began in 2019.

The main achievements of the first project were a baseline report and an “Action Plan for the MEPA for the implementation and monitoring of SDGs in agriculture and rural development in Georgia over the period 2018-2020”. FAO, Administration of Government and the Ministry of Agriculture held an awareness raising workshop “Supporting SDGs Implementation and Enabling Stakeholders’ Involvement, the Role of Food and Agriculture in the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda”. At the workshop, FAO introduced the vision and principles for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Around 40 participants took part in the workshop representing the Government, UN agencies, international resource partners, civil society organizations, private sector and academia. Under the project, FAO coordinated inclusion of relevant inputs into the Action Plan from MEPA, the administration of Georgia and the UN country team. FAO actively participates in the meetings of SDG National Council by advocating for SDG indicators under FAO custodianship and communicating with national actors their potential involvement in SDG implementation. Three days awareness raising/training workshop on SDG indicators under FAO custodianship was held at GEOSTAT. The aim of the workshop was to assist the target audience in better understanding of SDG indicators under FAO custodianship. The target audience of the workshop received information on FAO’s role on SDG monitoring and implementation at regional and national level; and methodology of each of the 21 indicators under FAO custodianship. Besides the data, there is a need to produce the indicators and steps to be undertaken for the country to be able to satisfy these data needs. Within the same project, MEPA staff has been trained on the role of environment, food and agriculture in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

During the second project, FAO aims to provide further capacity development to focal points responsible for data submission for the SDG indicators under FAO custodianship and for the integration of the SDG targets in SADG, including a number of workshops and consultative meetings with Parliamentarians, private sector, resource partners and representatives from the UN Country Team to further support mainstreaming of sustainable food and agriculture in the SDG nationalization process. In 2019, Georgia hosted a Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) mission, which brings technical expertise and advice to states in identifying the gaps and bottlenecks in implementing sustainable development and

2 “Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Components Related to Sustainable Food and Agriculture”
3. Assessment of FAO’s strategic positioning

assists them in identifying the SDG acceleration platform and define a country specific
SDG roadmap. The Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) was designed as a preparatory step
for MAPS mission. FAO was part of the United Nations Country Team expert team, which
prepared RIA as well as complexity analysis for MAPS mission.

27 Georgia was selected as one of the pilot countries for the implementation of the
Agricultural Integrated Survey (AGRIS), a ten-year farm based survey programme that
aims to provide cost-effective and timely statistical data for agricultural and rural sectors.
The new survey will help GEOSTAT to collect data for nationalized FAO custodian SDG
indicators under Goal 2.

3.2 Comparative advantage

Finding 4. FAO has a well-recognized comparative advantage in
supporting the Government and development partners in policy advice,
development of national strategies and plans, sectoral strategies in the
area of agricultural and rural development, and in coordination of policy
discourse among key development actors.

28 FAO’s work has been focused on supporting policy advocacy, development of strategies
and capacity development, which were complemented by downstream activities in
support of policy implementation. Virtually all stakeholders interviewed viewed FAO
as a highly competent institution with strong comparative advantage in supporting
development of national strategies and plans for the development of the agricultural
sector. Many stakeholders have also highlighted FAO’s key role in facilitating coordination
and discussion among relevant national and international development actors on critical
issues of policy dialogue and decision-making.

29 While the work on policy was regarded as highly valuable and effective, some stakeholders
have expressed their opinions that FAO may not have strong comparative advantage in
field-level interventions that support policies’ implementation, suggesting that in this
regard FAO is better positioned to focus its technical expertise on studies and analyses
aiming at informing potential decisions or interventions by other development actors, or in
supporting national level coordination of these efforts.

Finding 5. Besides engagement in policy development, FAO programme
has provided important contributions towards practical implementation
of the national policies and strategies in key sectors related to
agriculture. However, FAO’s engagement in this field is considerably
smaller compared to the other international development actors.

30 FAO’s support in formulation of national policies and strategies was complemented by
interventions aiming at developing necessary institutional and national capacities for
implementation, and contributions towards demonstration of best practices in implementing
national strategies. For example, the formulation of the Rural Development Strategy and
the National Strategy for Agricultural Extension was complemented by the support in the
establishment of the Agricultural Cooperatives Development Agency (ACDA), and related
capacity development interventions. The evaluation team found evidence of extensive work
undertaken by FAO with ACDA to promote development of agricultural cooperatives, rural
small and medium enterprises and sustainable food value chains.

31 Within the framework of the flagship ENPARD programme, FAO is also making contributions
to rural development through its work on developing value chains, training-of-trainers
programmes on improving extension services for farmers, and providing technical advice
to the Information Consultancy Service Centres located in different regions. In spite of
important results achieved in the area, some stakeholders expressed their views that FAO
may not have a strong comparative advantage in providing direct support to farmers, farmer associations or cooperatives due to the fact that other development actors, e.g. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have better implementation capacities and simplified financial and operational procedures for field level work (including grant schemes, cash transfers or other activities in support of local businesses).

32 FAO programme has effectively supported the Government of Georgia in the development of seed certification system, initially by focusing on development of Seed Law (2017), and later complemented by the design of certification scheme, development of the laboratory for seed certification, seed testing and by promoting voluntary certification of seeds and development of national capacities in international seed testing standards and field inspection methods. The system established and associated capacities are viewed by key stakeholders as one of the essential pillars for enhancing seed production and improving agricultural productivity.

33 FAO has also initiated work in supporting sustainable forest management. While key stakeholders from this sector valued FAO’s support provided in development of forestry sector and wildlife management, they recognized that forestry management is not regarded as priority by the Government, which affects the likelihood of achieving practical results in the near future. However, the technical support and policy advice provided to the national entities have been appreciated due to the complexity of issues involved.

**Finding 6.** Given the ongoing reform agenda and strong demand from the Government, continued support from FAO and other international actors are perceived as essential conditions for effective implementation of policies and strategies.

34 Almost all national stakeholders expressed their needs in continued support from FAO and key bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies towards achievement of national development objectives. There is a strong demand from the Government and its institutions for further assistance in improvement of legal and institutional frameworks, continued capacity development activities, and intensified technical advice and financial support in specialized areas such as plant protection, animal health and rural development. The evaluation concluded that this demand originates from the context of limited availability of public funding for agriculture, limited absorption capacity and limited human resource capacities of the national institutions, prevalence of vulnerabilities and risks (particularly in areas of plant and animal health and climate change-related risks) and the ambitious level of development targets associated with agriculture and rural development.

### 3.3 Normative values

**Finding 7.** FAO has been advocating for integration of human rights, equity and gender equality considerations in national laws, strategies and plans. It has used specific opportunities to design and implement interventions targeting the most vulnerable population, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and disadvantaged groups of rural population. These interventions, however, had limited scope and duration, in view of the historical engagement in these areas by other UN agencies and actors, and their comparative advantages and implementation capacities established in affected communities.

35 Despite continuous efforts by FAO in advocating for integration of UN normative values and principles, and its support to integration of related considerations in national policies and strategies, the support to their implementation and enforcement needs to be better considered. Targeted FAO activities have been implemented to assist the efforts of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. FAO has developed and implemented a project, with a particular
3. Assessment of FAO’s strategic positioning

focus on single parent and vulnerable IDPs, including youth, which were recognized as having significantly contributed to improvement of rural livelihoods for disadvantaged population.

36 It has also used specific opportunities to design and implement interventions targeting the most vulnerable population, including IDPs and disadvantaged groups of rural population. These interventions, however, had limited scope and duration, in view of the historical engagement in these areas by other UN agencies and actors, and their comparative advantages and implementation capacities established in affected communities. Through its field-level programmes, FAO has also promoted integration of environmental considerations by focusing on introduction of good agricultural practices, and sustainable management of forest and biodiversity.

3.4 Partnership and coordination

Finding 8. FAO has developed excellent long-standing relationships with the national government and its institutions and with key development partners, including the UN agencies and key funding partners.

37 All representatives from national ministries, government institutions and agencies interviewed have highly appreciated the long-standing collaboration and partnership with FAO, praising its technical competence, coordination and facilitation role, and ability to respond to emerging issues. The representatives from civil society organizations have also been expressing mostly positive feedback regarding collaboration and work with FAO, with some noting that such collaboration in the past was more strategic and policy-oriented in addressing key country needs and priorities, and has become limited to engagement in FAO capacity building initiatives or implementation services that are required by funding partners (e.g. European Union).

38 FAO contributes to the achievement of two Outcomes linked to Focus Areas of the United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development (UNPSD) 2016-2020. Focus Area 2 (Outcome 3: By 2020 poor and excluded population groups have better employment and livelihood opportunities as a result of inclusive and sustainable growth and development policies), and Focus Area 5 (Outcome 8: By 2020 communities enjoy greater resilience through enhanced institutional and legislative systems for environment protection, sustainable management of natural resources and disaster risk reduction). There have been good examples of joint programmes with UN agencies during this programme cycle, particularly with UNDP and UN Women.

39 FAO collaboration with its funding partners is organized mostly within the framework of European Union assistance to the country, with specific role assigned to FAO as a lead technical agency on key areas of its competence. FAO is a key player in the Donor Coordination Group (DCG) on Agriculture, effectively serving as provider of a technical expertise and secretarial support to this mechanism. The key funding partners, such as the European Union, the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Swiss Cooperation Office have been increasingly relying on FAO to design and implement interventions in support of policy development and implementation. This cooperation opens the window of opportunity to design and implement joint projects with other UN agencies and international financial institutions.

40 FAO holds regular consultations with the civil society on key aspects of its programme implementation. These consultations are mainly organized through national coordination platform, which is perceived by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as a useful mechanism for communications with MEPA and with representatives of the UN agencies and other development actors. FAO engagement with the private sector were limited to few interventions, such as joint European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)/FAO programme to introduce dairy farmers to new production methods, involving private sector stakeholders in the process of developing the draft legislation for the wine sector, and organizing workshops on development of agribusiness and value chains. This limited engagement is also due to the limited size of the private sector involvement in agriculture and rural development, although it is gradually increasing.
4. Assessment of FAO’s contributions

4.1 Priority Area 1 – Institutional development

Finding 9. FAO contributions to the development of national policies, strategies and plans were timely and technically sound. While implementation of these policies and strategies face significant constraints, the overall support provided was highly appreciated by the Government and key partners and produced a number of notable results.

41 FAO support to policy, normative, standard setting and institutional frameworks building was provided through Outputs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 of the CPF Outcome 1.

42 FAO interventions related to Output 1.1 focused on support to the Social-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia, the Strategy for Agricultural Development 2015-2020 and key strategic and policy processes as well as related capacity building. The evaluation found that FAO engaged in a range of areas by providing its technical and advisory support: i) in the design of relevant policies (e.g. national agricultural extension system development, law on cooperatives, law on seed certification), for improvement of frameworks and structures (e.g. framework for statistical data collection and marketing information systems); and ii) in raising awareness and building capacities for the development of agricultural extension services.

43 The evaluation found concrete examples of relevant and successful interventions. For example, the National Strategy for Agricultural Extension in Georgia 2018-2019 was developed and adopted due to extensive engagement and dialogue between FAO and MEPA, and subsequent support in the actual drafting of specific provisions by FAO technical experts. The numerous technical sub-components of programmes included: M&E system design with data infrastructure and quality assurance; strengthening institutions for agricultural information; Policy Unit establishment; human resource system development; agricultural extension development; value chain-related policy measures; climate-smart agricultural practices. In addition to the outcomes defined in the projects, FAO provided “on-demand” consultancy support related to the different elements of ADS implementation.

44 The projects Capacity Development of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia: Improved Policy Making and Effective Implementation of the Strategy for Agricultural Development (GCP/GEO/004/AUT) and Strengthening capacities of stakeholders for the implementation of the SADG 2015-2020 and the RDSG 2017-2020 (GCP/GEO/012/AUS) were highly relevant as they responded to the Ministry’s need for technical support to implement Agricultural Development Strategy. Under the ENPARD umbrella, the project complemented the Government Cooperative Programme (GCP) technical assistance project funded by the European Commission “Capacity Development of the Ministry of Agriculture” (GCP/GEO/001/EC). The technical support provided by the two projects covered almost all seven pillars of the Agricultural Development Strategy. The focus on developing and testing innovative approaches for rural development and governance schemes at a community level in least favourable areas was particularly relevant to the local context. The gained knowledge and positive experience were intended to be scaled up and institutionalized in other similar areas.

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3 Namely, by strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia to better plan and execute the value chains through a comprehensive methodology based on the high value addition and export earnings generation capacity.

4 As a common practice, the Ministry usually approaches FAO with ad-hoc technical requests.

5 (1) Enhanced competitiveness of rural entrepreneurs; (2) Institutional Development; (3) Amelioration and Soil Fertility; (4) Regional and sectorial development - value chain development; (5) Ensuring Food Security; (6) Food Safety, Veterinary and Plant Protection; (7) Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity.
Finding 10. The majority of FAO interventions were designed in response to national priorities, and based on the detailed local context analysis and comprehensive review of the challenges related to the agricultural sector development in Georgia.

The evaluation found that the majority of the CPF projects were designed to contribute to the outcomes of the country programme and of the national strategies targeting the implementation of agricultural policies. In particular, the ENPARD projects, the largest in the CPF portfolio, show the highest degree of alignment. Despite the fact that a number of projects were halfway through their implementation, their design and strong technical content and effective cooperation with relevant stakeholders provided a strong base for effectiveness in achieving the programme portfolio outcomes.

Stakeholder interviews indicated that FAO is regarded by national institutions as the leading international Organization in Georgia, which provides advisory support and technical expertise to the Government, particularly to MEPA, on key institutional and legal aspects of national agricultural policy development. Although in recent years many international organizations started the implementation of the agriculture development projects, FAO is positioned as the leading institution supporting MEPA in the agricultural policy formulation and implementation. It is notable that top management of MEPA acknowledges FAO to be a very solid and respected Organization.

In the context of supporting high level policy formulation and national strategy development, it is very important to highlight FAO’s role in supporting MEPA to draft the new agricultural and rural development strategy. The new strategy will cover the period from 2021 to 2027 and will consist of two main components: i) agriculture sector development led by FAO in cooperation with MEPA and other relevant stakeholders; and ii) rural development led by UNDP in cooperation with MEPA and other relevant stakeholders.

MEPA granted the official mandate to FAO to lead efforts in supporting development of the agriculture sector component of the strategy due to the Organization’s strong technical expertise and local context knowledge as well as solid experience in the agricultural policy formulation. In this process, FAO’s main function is to support MEPA in the development of the main strategic outcomes, results indicators as well as the formulation of the implementation modality for the agriculture part of the strategy. According to the evaluation informants, FAO has effectively facilitated the high level discussions among main stakeholders within its entrusted responsibility.

In the context of the policy instruments, the introduction of the monitoring system enables MEPA and particularly its subsidiary agency, the Agricultural Project Management Agency (APMA), to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the implemented activities. In addition, the results-oriented monitoring system considerably improved the quality of the progress reports developed by MEPA and its subsidiary agencies. Within the context of contributions to the institutional changes, the data warehouse system developed by FAO for MEPA represents an effective tool to conduct comprehensive agriculture statistical data analysis, market trends assessment, agribusiness value chain studies as well as improve coordination among the different departments inside the Ministry.

In terms of limiting factors that affected the achievement of results there are the absorption capacities of the national institutions, and limited human and financial resources available to fully own the results achieved in the course of FAO programme implementation. This combined with the trend of frequent changes of the MEPA organizational set up at the level of deputy ministers presents a challenge for projects implementation causing delays in some cases.

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6 Interview with the Ministry of Environmental Protection And Agriculture (MEPA), Head of Policy Analyses Department.

7 Interview with the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD), Head of Economic Development Unite.
4. Assessment of FAO’s contributions

Finding 11. FAO is recognized by key stakeholders as a trusted partner and a neutral player to coordinate high level policy dialogue and facilitate decision-making. FAO engagement in facilitating the coordination platform among MEPA and donor community has contributed to the implementation of the national agriculture strategy.

The evaluation team found that FAO engagement in Output 1.2 was in line with the strategic priorities of MEPA and fully reflected the local context needs. As poverty reduction and rural development became one of the top priorities for the Government of Georgia and international donor organizations, international and national stakeholders have increased their interest and engagement in the agriculture sector development process. Therefore, FAO’s assistance towards development of the operational coordination platform was essential to ensure efficient implementation of the national agriculture development strategy.

Based on the interviews with MEPA and other main stakeholders, the evaluation discovered that FAO interventions to engage the broader spectrum of the stakeholders in the coordination process were successful. For example, through the coordination platform FAO engaged the NGOs, which have a wide network of regional offices and a strong local context knowledge on issues of agriculture and rural development. The development of coordination platform also became an important tool for the donor organizations to direct their technical and financial resources towards strategic priorities of the national agriculture development strategy.

Among examples of successful donor coordination meetings organized by FAO there are the ones related to the support of the value chain development for small farmers’ community and linking the agricultural research and innovations with the community farming in Georgia. The growth-oriented agribusiness value chain development is one of the most important priorities of the National Agriculture Development Strategy. The donor coordination meeting led by FAO facilitated the high level policy dialogue among MEPA and international donor organizations on how to design the agribusiness value chain benefiting the rural population. Another coordination meeting on agricultural research and innovations was oriented to the design and implementation of extension system development projects for small farmers.

The evaluation team found that in addition to the national coordination platform, individual projects’ steering committee meetings also served as a very useful mechanism for developing effective coordination among the main stakeholders. For example, FAO provides the secretarial support to the ENPARD project Stakeholder Committee, which is a very important mechanism to facilitate cooperation between the main ministries, European Union and other resource partners as well as to identify the possible areas of cooperation and leveraging the financial and technical resources. Key stakeholder of the ENPARD project expressed the need for improved coordination of activities to ensure that outcomes of the rural development and agriculture development strategies will be merged. The evaluation concluded that the current organization set up of the ENPARD Committee established communication lines among FAO, UNDP and MEPA which were the key preconditions to ensure that efficient coordination continues throughout project implementation.

The Animal Health Steering Committee is a key mechanism for FAO to facilitate the policy level discussions related to animal health among key stakeholders. Previously, the committee was led by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the framework of animal health project. Upon project completion in 2019, MEPA planned to be in charge of the committee but due to limited financial resources, the Ministry requested FAO to take the leading role.

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8 Donor coordination meeting related to Support to value chain development perspectives for small farmer community. Dated 24 March 2017

9 Interview with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), Head of Policy Analyses Department

10 Interview with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Head of the Economic Development Unit.
Based on evidence obtained from the interviews of the senior staff members of MEPA and international organizations as well as desk review, it appeared that FAO in Georgia is positioned among its partners as the leading international organization working on the issues of agricultural policy and institutional development. An effective cooperation with the international organizations allows FAO Georgia to leverage its financial and technical resources to obtain optimal results.

The evaluation noted an increasing demand for the FAO-led studies, assessments and publications on issues affecting rural development in Georgia. FAO projects publications such as agribusiness value chain studies, agri-calendars and agribusiness market studies receive high level of interest among farmers. Besides, it was evident that these studies were actively used by other donor organizations in developing new projects or in improving the provision of the agricultural extension services to the small-scale farmers.

**Finding 12. FAO interventions in developing the capacities of national institutions in implementing gender-sensitive livelihood programme for IDPs has been successful and is fully in line with the strategic priorities of the Government of Georgia.**

The project Gender sensitive socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable IDPs (GCP/GEO/007/EC) responded to the problems associated with the high incidence of internal displacement to the overall population, with women constituting more than half of IDP. Poverty and unemployment are key challenges for this group, with many being dependent on IDP status-related or social vulnerability-related allowances. The overall objective of the project was to improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable internally displaced population in Georgia including categories with IDP status.

FAO cooperation with UN Women to support the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA) to develop gender equality strategy was very successful and resulted in drafting a high quality document and a two year action plan to implement the strategy. The project design and approach exercised a multidimensional approach in terms of engaging state institutions, as well as local civil society organizations (CSOs)/NGOs, in the process to tackle the diverse causes of poverty and inequality of the target group, and to ensure the sustainability of project results (capacity building of the state institutions, local CSOs/NGOs that work with IDPs permanently). Due to the high engagement of MRA staff in the development of both documents, the Ministry took full ownership for the strategy and the action plan, which is a good precondition for the sustainability of results during and post-implementation.

FAO and UN Women worked with a broad spectrum of stakeholders on the topics related to the effective and efficient implementation of the IDP livelihood programmes. In this regard, the evaluation team found that FAO engagement related to the provision of the series of training modules for MRA staff, local authorities and local NGOs on the topics related to sustainable socioeconomic programme planning and implementation in the IDP populated areas was particularly successful. The training modules included the development of policy formulation skills as well as focused on strengthening the technical skills of the participants.

Despite the challenges of overly administrative and rigid approach in regard to the vulnerable group definition, eligibility approval and corresponding reporting defined by government, the project exceeded results in terms of IDP outreach and a social mobilization. The gender component of the project was strengthened by the engagement

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11 Interview with head of regional office of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), Lagodekhi municipality.
12 (i) single parent with minor; (ii) households with disabled family member; (iii) youth-headed households (less than 25 years old, caring for minor siblings); (iv) elderly-headed households (pensioners caring for minors); and (v) group (3 or 5 families) comprising the people listed above.
13 Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA) in 2018 merged with the Ministry of Health and Social Services.
of UN Women and its corresponding partners, which are highly experienced in the field and demonstrated innovative approach in social mobilization.

The co-financing payment modality of the project was targeting the socioeconomic development of the IDP populated rural areas where very few international organizations are operating in co-financing. In addition to bringing economic benefits to targeted population, it is possible that FAO’s project might serve as a success story to facilitate further resource mobilization from donors to the IDP populated areas.

The combination of trainings and co-financing modality is one of the main reasons for the sustainability of FAO’s interventions during and after the project. The stakeholders engaged in the socioeconomic development process are equipped with relevant technical skills to formulate and manage pro-poor growth-oriented development interventions. The component of the co-financing modality provides the opportunity for stakeholders to have access to the financial resources needed for the implementation of specific activities of the designed projects.

4.2 Priority Area 2 - Regional and sectoral development – value chain development

4.2.1 Programme relevance

Finding 13. FAO’s programme in Georgia has been highly valuable and relevant. In implementing its projects and programmes, FAO demonstrated strong technical competence and gained significant reputation with the Government for outstanding performance.

Since 2013, the focus of FAO project interventions has been on multidimensional capacity building of the Ministry of Agriculture (MEPA) and its agencies as well as on donor coordination. The main components of the Ministry’s capacity building included: institutional development; European Union’s Sector Policy Support Programs14 (SPSP) progress evaluation; designing components of the rural and agricultural development strategy directly targeted by the ENPARD Programme; implementation of support measures for the agricultural development strategy. The increase in the programme scale and activities correlated with the significant contributions from funding partners, especially within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Programme initiatives.

The project “National Program for Rehabilitation of Seed Production System in Georgia” (GCP/GEO/003/AUS) responded to the country’s needs to address critical problems in the seed production system, such as low yield of cereals due to poor seed quality. Seed legislation and certification system is one of the priority areas for the Georgian government and the Ministry of Agriculture (MEPA). FAO’s comparative advantage to implement this project was regarded by key stakeholders as undisputable, considering its role in providing specialized technical expertise as the leading UN agency in supporting agriculture and rural development policies.

These projects have a complex design where some technical components could be considered as separate projects. For example, institutional development components included an establishment of the Agricultural Cooperatives Development Agency; an institutional framework set up for the decentralized extension system developed by the Ministry of Agriculture; and policy formulation and implementation to support environmentally friendly agriculture developed. The sectorial and value chain development component focused on the sustainable models for rural development in mountainous areas and specifically disadvantaged areas identified and developed.

14 The projects supported the implementation of measures stipulated by the tranche payments under ENPARD and pertained to fulfillment of the specific conditions, such as: Strengthened farmers’ cooperation; Capacity building for small-scale farmers and institutions involved in agriculture, etc.
4.2.2 Effectiveness and contributions to results

Finding 14. The country programme has made successful contributions to several key areas, such as institutional development of the government entities responsible for the country’s agricultural and rural policy implementation; policy development in a number of sectors and agricultural value chains.

67 The key actors at centralized and decentralized levels acquired necessary institutional and human capacities to implement SADG and getting prepared for implementing the RDSG. Sound training was provided to capacitate the ministerial staff. Under the project GCP/GEO/010/EC, the following outputs were delivered: i) Strategy for Agriculture Development in Georgia 2015-2020 and Action Plan developed and approved; ii) the creation of Agriculture Cooperatives Development Agency, including the provision of training and coaching; iii) set of recommendations developed for the application of universal support programmes for agriculture cooperatives; iv) strategy for the development of Agricultural Cooperation elaborated; v) key structural changes in the Ministry of Agriculture implemented, such as the creation of a Policy Unit and Policy Group; vi) assistance provided for the overall implementation of the European Union Sector Policy Support Program for Agriculture and Rural Development in Georgia; vii) legal background assessed and legal amendments proposed for an aquaculture law regulating the sector; viii) policy dialogue facilitated between Ministry of Agriculture and the European Union Delegation to Georgia, in order to mainstream some critical areas of work following the European model.

68 Results-Oriented-Monitoring (ROM) system designed to track implementation of the Strategy and its Action Plan has been developed and handed over to the Ministry to replace previous reporting tools that were developed on an ad hoc basis, and had a tendency to be more cumbersome and narrative-oriented. The system introduced by FAO was perceived by the Ministry to be more consistent, concise and relevant, enabling more effective production of reports and information for decision-making. However, analysis of the key informant interviews revealed that the system has not been used yet to its full potential. While the ministry representatives suggest the software application issues are the reason for this, there are views that the ROM system is too advanced to be employed by the ministries. At the moment, monitoring data collection for government projects is done by the Agricultural Project Management Agency, another agency FAO helped to develop an evaluation framework. The evaluation was not able to obtain evidence on how the information is collected and used from the Ministry’s Policy Unit as the Unit seems to be functionally disconnected from this process.

69 Another contribution of FAO to the evidence-based decision-making is the development of the Market Information System (MIS) for 60 agriculture products in all municipalities of Georgia. Despite the initial efforts to computerize the process, the data is still collected on paper and manually entered into a web page. However, the consolidated data can be visible to third parties, an option that did not exist previously. It should be noted, however, that evaluation did not find evidence of usage of the produced analytics, especially by the Policy Unit.

70 Notable achievements were made in creating an institutional framework to advance reforms and develop the capacities of MEPA officers and provide them with the appropriate tools to carry out their work. Key project stakeholders shared their positive perceptions regarding quality of capacity development activities, timeliness of these activities and relevance to their current needs. Among other milestones is FAO’s support in transformation of the National Wine Agency into an industry-led organization positioned in both domestic and international markets. Another achievement was FAO’s empowerment of agricultural

15 The government, as part of the European Union supported Public Administration Program (PAR), has taken steps in introduction of the M&E system as a unified platform for all ministries requiring specific MIS and software applications to be introduced. FAO’s technical assistance implies a simple tool and a smartsheet software which seems not to be compatible with the centralized MIS.
4. Assessment of FAO’s contributions

FAO’s policy assistance under Institutional Development Priority Area has resulted in delivering effective policymaking tools for the Ministry. The evaluation observed that FAO was effective in proposing and designing suitable technical solutions serving the interests of the Ministry and its implementing agencies. An ultimate effectiveness of these tools (ROM, M&E, MIS etc.) is yet to be seen when fully put in practice, which will require time and more awareness about evidence-based policymaking within the line ministries. While agriculture information system supported by FAO has provided essential instruments for effective monitoring and policymaking, the ministerial staff was not in full command of utilizing the developed tools upon completion of the project. The limited ability of the ministry staff to apply the advanced M&E system for effective supervision of the progress of SADG and RDSG and general policymaking is still a matter of concern.

Despite the significant progress of the ENPARD projects’ actions towards supporting improved policymaking and effective implementation of the SADG and RDSG, the evaluation team acknowledged the challenge of ensuring national ownership of results achieved and prospects for sustaining the acquired human capacities. The series of structural reforms and reorganizations undertaken by the government in 2017-2018 resulted in the merge of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection with the Ministry of Agriculture, with subsequent transfer of relevant personnel among different agencies and departments. The future of the Agricultural Cooperatives Development Agency is also unclear after its merge with APMA. The key departments of MEPA and its agencies are often understaffed with generally high level of qualified staff drain. This, reportedly, affected the likelihood of sustainability of the acquired skills in case of transfers, staff rotation or staff resigning. Another factor affecting sustainability is availability of financial resources and budget allocations towards implementation of policies and plans, as the Government largely depends on external financial support, especially in the agriculture sector.

The project GCP/GEO/003/AUS met all three its objectives: i) introduction of the National Programme Seed and Planting Materials Production; ii) Ministry of Agriculture capacity strengthening in Programme elaboration and implementation; and iii) seed producers group capacity strengthening. According to the key informants, there was a 30 percent increase in productivity of wheat and barley production after the first harvest that followed the certification system introduction, which was believed to be mostly attributable to the project. The results achieved by the project have preconditions for sustainability. The established certification system is operationally sustainable as the project obtained equipment for the seed testing laboratory. The system has not reached economic sustainability yet which might present a future challenge. In the meantime, MEPA covers the costs for the first three years after project completion. Another challenge for sustainability is the limited capacity of the Government to implement the project at full scale.

The project “Capacity development of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia” (GCP/GEO/004/AUT), has probably the most complex design with multiple components that could serve as separate projects. Its outputs across all components were delivered with high completion rates in almost all cases, many targets having been exceeded by considerable margins by the time of project completion. Among the achievements there were: i) establishment of the ACDA and its capacity building; ii) establishment of agrometeorological systems; iii) feasibility study and the design of the farm registry system; iv) development of good agricultural practices (GAP); v) a feasibility study for least favourable areas and support the preparation of a national legal framework. The project supported design of a number of legislative acts: national seed law, ministerial decrees on farmers registry system, concept note on rural development for the least favourable areas to be included in the RDSG as well the conditionality of the international agreements

16 Such as: the online Market-Information System (MIS), Food Price Monitoring & Analysis (FPMA) and Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) surveys conducted on a quarterly basis by GEOSTAT.

17 Key informant interviews with the department heads revealed that the competent staff leave for International NGOs or donor organizations and attracting new staff is challenging due uncompetitive pay.
between the European Union and the Government. Modern technologies and equipment provided to beneficiaries under pilot projects of GAP and rural development are available for demonstrations to a wider number of farmers. The tourist infrastructure that was a part of the rural development component is available and is used by tourists and tourism agencies. Most of the activities initiated with the support of the project have been continued by the Government. According to key evaluation informants, the involvement of MEPA staff in the implementation and planning of project activities contributed to the sustainability of results.

75 The pilot projects for rural development in mountainous areas were implemented. The pilots were designed to work through the local initiative groups (LIGs), an approach involving local representatives in decision-making. LIGs were planned to become the owners of the tested model. This has not been materialized. While LIGs were initially involved in the local area strategy development and beneficiary selection process for the investment grant component, the groups seemed to stop operating although still formally existed. The complete least favourable areas model was not adopted by the Government. According to key evaluation informants, this happened due to the insufficient capacity of the Government to adopt the least favourable area approach. As a result, only a concept of “high-mountainous region” was adopted and became a law leaving other Georgian territories with rural poverty technically qualified as LFA out of scope of the legislation.

76 The project on empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods (TCP/RER/3601) aimed to carry out the country assessment of smallholders and family farming, prepare the action plan and conduct the related capacity development and awareness raising workshop. The comprehensive study on the development of commercial family farms with major policy level recommendations was provided. However, the action plan for smallholder and family farms are still in the process of development as a contribution to the overall rural and agricultural development strategy formulation provided by FAO.

4.3 Priority Area 3 - Food safety, veterinary and plant protection

4.3.1 Programme relevance

Finding 15. FAO conducted a number of projects in areas of food safety, veterinary and plant protection that present strategic relevance for the country and addresses the country’s most urgent needs in these areas.

77 The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and FAO joined forces to support Georgia’s dairy sector that is greatly important for country development, yet was not utilized to its potential. The project intends to support Georgia in exporting its products to the European Union by addressing food safety concerns and low-quality standards of milk production. The assessment, carried out by EBRD and FAO, showed that production of higher quality milk by commercial farms could be increased by at least 50-70 percent without major investments if proper technologies and management practices were employed. The project’s capacity development programme for commercial farms in Georgia contributed to significant improvements in farms’ milk productivity.

78 The project Technical Assistance to Support the Establishment of a National Animal Identification, Registration and Traceability System (NAITS) in Georgia (GCP/GEO/009/SWI) is fully in line with the SADG’s Strategic Direction 6 on food safety, veterinary and plant protection and its measure 6.2 on improved livestock identification system. The project

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18 Evaluation team could not find an evidence of LIGs existence during the field visit to Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti municipality.

19 Measure 6.2 of the SADG: “Improved livestock identification and registration systems will be created, in order to ensure protection of livestock and population health, manage epidemiological situation, provide consumers with reliable information about origin and safety of animal products, supply information on animal movement within country and implement veterinary control on exports and imports, ensure labelling, transparency and traceability in meat trade and also, improve breeding.”
4. Assessment of FAO’s contributions

establishes animal traceability system, which covers animal identification registration, holding registration, animal movement, veterinary diseases, vaccination, slaughterhouses, and traceability of animal origin. The comprehensive system provides information related to food safety, human health, international requirements and international trade aligning the animal health monitoring in Georgia with the standards of DCFTA agreement with the European Union.

FAO’s Brucellosis Prevention and Control Programme (UTF/GEO/006) was also highly relevant due to the high prevalence of the Brucellosis disease dangerous for animals and humans in the country and the need for its prevention and control measurements. The Government of Georgia requested FAO jointly with the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) to establish a strategic plan for an effective eradication and control of the disease.

The regional project Conservation and development of dual-purpose cattle breeds in Eastern Europe (TCP/RER/3604) responds to a problem in conservation and development of local, Caucasian Brown Cattle Breed which is endangered. FAO aims to prepare the concept and details of development programmes for the selected breeds, based on a solid assessment of the existing situation of genetic resources and their production systems. The project will form the basis for the formulation of breeding development plans, addressing the conservation and genetic development of the Caucasian Brown Cattle Breed population as well as the non-genetic aspects of breed development.

The results of the project Nationwide Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) in Georgia (TCP/GEO/3601/01) will serve as a basis for implementation of all phytosanitary projects in the country. FAO’s support was directly requested by the National Food Agency. The PCE evaluation clearly highlights strengths and weaknesses in terms of phytosanitary situation in the country and is a legal instrument to help the country prioritize activities and resources to fill capacity gaps and enhance effectiveness of its entire phytosanitary system. All relevant stakeholders provided suggestions to the PCE document that strengthen its relevance to the country’s needs and particular context. The project aims to fully implement the International Plant Protection Convention as well as other international obligations related to phytosanitary.

The project Strengthening Capacity of National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) (TCP/GEO/3602) to Control Newly Introduced erwinia amylovora in Georgia is fully in line with the SADG 2015-2020 Strategic Direction 3.6 on plant protection, animal health and phytosanitary and its measures. In 2016, when first outbreak of the unknown pest appeared in the country, FAO’s assistance in the diagnostics and awareness raising about the disease was crucial, since laboratory diagnostic tests didn’t exist and knowledge of the problem was poor.

The FAO project “Support for Establishment of the National Plant Pest Monitoring and Forecast System” (TCP/GEO/3701) assisted in addressing problems associated with detection of quarantine pests. The forecast system developed was highly relevant to enhance plant protection, reducing unnecessary use of chemicals and fertilizers for harmless food production and to increase yields. The agro-meteorology stations established under GCP/GEO/004/AUS project, assisted in monitoring the conditions affecting plant health: winds, air temperature, humidity, solar radiation, rainfall and risks of the plant diseases.

FAO also provided relevant support to locust outbreak, problem that exists since 1998. The national locust early warning system is further strengthened as a result of FAO support for effective use of modern tools for collecting and analysing field data and producing forecast. The goal is to establish a system on how to use regular information and early warning against potential, known and emerging threats to the agriculture and food security sectors.

Direction 3.6.3: Plant Protection and phytosanitary reliability and measure; Direction 3.6.4: Laboratory capacity enhancement and establishment of modern testing techniques compliant with the international standards for food safety, animal health and phytosanitary control programs.
4.3.2 Effectiveness and contributions to results

Finding 16. FAO reached multiple good results in strengthening food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary systems, often leveraging limited resources available for projects in these areas. The projects put in place strategies to mitigate challenges related to availability of qualified specialists in related areas as well as to low engagement of farmers by providing capacity development and raising awareness among stakeholders. However, resolution for challenges such as lack of veterinarians in the country will require more time and efforts.

Within the FAO and EBRD cooperation, 16 commercial dairy farms from Georgia supported the creation of the commercial local dairy association. In addition, seven new commercial dairy farms were created and received technical assistance. The knowledge-sharing study tours were organized where international and local experts provided advice on services and activities that could be developed to association’s management and its members. FAO and EBRD also provided technical inputs that include market monitoring and analysis tools for a supply and demand balance system, provision of practical information through the web page and capacity building to the association members. In less than two years, total production of higher quality milk at assisted commercial farms has grown by 80 percent due to improved technologies and business management knowledge, while productivity has increased by 20-35 percent compared to the country average increase of 7.2 percent during the same period. The creation of the commercial dairy association that promotes farmers’ interests, shares professional knowledge and promotes further skills building is a precondition for the long-term sustainability of these private sector efforts.

While the animal identification and traceability system project (NAITS) (GCP/GEO/009/SWI) is half through its implementation, the evaluation team obtained multiple evidence of the effectiveness of the system’s contributions towards more comprehensive and effective management of animal health-related information and related decision-making. Before NAITS project was planned, NFA was collecting animal health-related information on paper that months later was transferred into the Excel database, which didn’t have capacity to store and filter relevant information. NAITS system aims to correct these shortcomings by synchronizing information and by being a user-friendly software allowing farmers to include information in the system independently.

Field visits and interviews with beneficiaries including NFA officials, farmers and the slaughterhouses employees demonstrated that project results were delivered in a timely and effective manner. The Animal Identification and Registration Draft Regulation was updated, the NAITS system was ready for piloting, capacity development and the awareness raising campaigns were completed, and NAITS as a system included in the national veterinary curriculum. The project also contributed to the update of legislation on animal identification and registration. Cooperation between NFA and FAO was reported as highly satisfactory, and FAO was assigned the responsibility of chairing function for the Animal Health Steering Committee (AHSC).

The comprehensive National Brucellosis Control Strategy developed by the project on Brucellosis prevention and control (UTF/GEO/006) is approved by the government. It covers full chain of activities to be carried out against the disease including the type of vaccines for small ruminant and cattle, serological monitoring, awareness raising campaigns and trainings for veterinarians. The strategy is developed in close cooperation with the state veterinarians and matches the European Union regulation requirements. It is in line with FAO, World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and World Health Organization (WHO) standards. Vaccination campaign against Brucellosis started in 2016. Previously, the project organized a number of awareness raising campaigns and workshops in collaboration with NFA and Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA). Trainings carried out in five regions and covered up to 200 specialists. Throughout the programme, all the newborn animals are being vaccinated for preventive measures in suspected areas. For the future disease eradicated, information regarding Brucellosis is reflected in the NAITS. The approved
4. Assessment of FAO’s contributions

legislation regarding brucellosis prevention measurements adopted as a result of the project is a good precondition for the sustainability of the vaccination campaign on Brucellosis. For example in 2019, a vaccination of small ruminant has initiated. A continuing awareness raising campaign is another important element for sustainability. Key officers from NFA were trained to be able to continue the GIPA campaigns run for initial three months.

To accesses project effectiveness on the development of the dual-purpose cattle breeds (TCP/RER/3604), more time is required as the main purpose of the project was to design and conduct the genetic material survey questionnaire. The comprehensive survey was drafted and piloted in the five municipalities where Caucasian Brown Cattle was spread. The analysis of the survey results will become the basis for a five-year follow-up project to improve Caucasian Brown Cattle Breed. Some obstacles were also identified for project sustainability addressing conservation of cattle breeds. There is an insufficient number of bulls in the country as farmers slaughter them during unproductive winter-time that presents a problem for a conservation. Another issue is availability of balanced feeding of animals as the genetic improvements alone would not be sufficient for high productivity. An awareness rising campaign regarding the importance of the local breed conservation could make results more sustainable, but might be insufficient as a single measure to combat these challenges.

The project TCP/GEO/3601/C1 had two components that have been successfully reached: an evaluation of the phytosanitary legislation and a capacity assessment. Five-year country strategic plan for phytosanitary department defining a long-term measurements related to phytosanitary capacity is developed. The informative modules are established and provide information on risk analysis and assessment, certification system, import regulation, pest free zones, surveillance, disease eradication, fighting measures and laboratory capacities.

FAO assistance to diagnose the erwinia amylovora (TCP/GEO/3602) was effective. Before the project, the Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture (LMA) did not have capacity to diagnose and treat the disease and was sending samples for diagnostics abroad. The staff of the LMA and the National Food Agency received trainings on preventive measures, treatment, diseases detection and laboratory testing method. An internal diagnostics capacity developed to implement the method as well as an awareness raising campaign conducted are preconditions for the sustainability of disease prevention. A good example of an effectiveness of the measures applied is the state planted orchard in Shida Kartli that survived the erwinia amylovora outbreak after knowledge and technologies introduced by FAO were applied.

FAO is also assisting the Government of Georgia with the integrated pest management that is becoming the standard for handling pest problems in agriculture and urban settings. The project is still in its inception phase and only identified pilots in Kakheti and Shida Kartli regions where farmer field schools are using apples, eggplants and peppers for IPM demonstrations.

As a result of the project establishing the pest monitoring and forecast system (TCP/GEO/3701/C1), NFA is better equipped to plan annual countrywide monitoring activities using newly developed national protocols and technical documents. The project established the pest monitoring system, identified specialists responsible for the pest monitoring in Georgia and conducted a related awareness raising campaigns for farmers, extension services, NGOs and local NFA staff. In January 2019, the GCP/GEO/004/AUS project as well as the payment obligations were handed over to the Government, however none of the agro-meteorology stations are working due to unpaid annual fees, and five of these have been damaged and require repairing.

Good results are reached in the project on locust outbreak prevention. The national locust early warning system was further strengthened as a result of FAO support for effective use of modern tools for collecting and analysing field data and producing forecasts, such as computers, GPS as well as special sprayer aggregates. Training on security methods of spraying treatment against locust has been carried out for NFA phytosanitary staff.
4.4 Priority Area 4 - Climate change, environment and biodiversity

Finding 17. FAO has made significant contributions towards promoting climate change adaptation, environmental sustainability and addressing elements of biodiversity. Yet, this important work is still in its early stages and needs to continue to help the country achieve its relevant development targets.

Within the context of Priority Area 4, FAO’s work has been focused on awareness raising and policy advice on climate-smart agriculture approaches and institutional development and farm-level support in the introduction of good agricultural practices.

At policy and institutional levels, FAO’s climate change related work pertains to the RDSG. FAO’s effective work in promoting integration of climate-smart agriculture principles into the RDSG’s Strategy and Action was evident. Under ENPARD II project, the work on institutional capacity development on climate-smart agriculture was undertaken for the ministry and the municipal information-consultation centres. However, the mid-term evaluation of the project indicated that while the awareness raising programme has been elaborated and implemented, it is unlikely that the target of an outlined climate-smart action plan can be met by the end of the project. It was evident from the interviews with key stakeholders that the Ministry is not yet prepared to emphasize implementation of the climate-smart action plan, as it focuses its priorities on other strategies of the RDSG, e.g. rural development.

Stakeholders observed that while FAO promotes and implements interventions on sustainable environment management, their effects were not evident, as the country continued to face challenges of land degradation, population-induced resource scarcity, vulnerability to weather-induced hazards and desertification.

Capacity Building for Sustainable Wildlife Management is a relatively new area of FAO’s focus. The Policy Suggestions Paper on Sustainable Hunting drafted by FAO puts forward a set of policy options for the regulation of a sustainable hunting management system, taking into account the country-specific hunting-related issues and challenges as well as Georgia’s international commitments pertaining to hunting. MEPA has reviewed and accepted the recommendations contained in the Policy Paper which resulted in the establishment of the National Wildlife Agency under the Ministry. In parallel, the review of legal and institutional issues related to fishing has been drafted in view of legislative work on sustainable fisheries management in Georgia.

FAO has provided valuable assistance to national institutions in protecting endangered tree species from pests and diseases outbreaks. As a result of the joint FAO-UNDP project “Assessment for the Development of a Forest Health Programme” (within ENPARD II), FAO experts have assessed the situation of forest health in Abkhazia, and intensively supported stakeholders to combat the pest infestations of boxwood, canary palms and the European chestnut. The application of pest control through the use of pheromone traps and attractants has proven to be effective and provided opportunity to monitor presence of pests.

At field level, FAO assisted the Government in demonstrating the potential benefits of good agricultural practices to farmers through training sessions, online videos and comprehensive cultivation guidelines on production of fruits that are commonly produced in Georgia as well as provision of tools. FAO supported introduction of climate-smart agriculture through its new project (GCP/GEO/012/AUS) addressing three intertwined challenges: ensuring food security through increased productivity and income, adapting to climate change and contributing to mitigation of climate change. Printed copies of apple, persimmon, peach and nectarine, mandarine production GAP were distributed to the state and private extension centres, farmers and other stakeholders involved in apple value chain. GAP demonstration orchards targeting environmentally friendly practices
and focusing on irrigation, orchard nutrition, weed management, pruning and IPM were established. Beneficiary cooperatives were given all the necessary safety equipment for applying chemicals, small tractors and modern sprayers. A pilot agrometeorological system has benefitted some 8 000 people in Kakheti region, where farmers receive mobile text messages on prevalent crop diseases and advice on necessary treatments. According to a regional Information and Consultation Centre representative from Kakheti, the survey demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the service. According to MEPA, the development of agro-meteorology system enables the ministry staff to mitigate the risks caused by rapid changes in weather conditions which is the main cause of plant disease.

FAO has also produced publication of the scientific album on hunting and forest management customs in ancient Georgia, using historical perspective to advocate for the principles of sustainable forest management. In spite of the important work undertaken, the promotion of sustainable food and agriculture, climate change and biodiversity remain limited in size and scope. FAO has also supported measures for maintenance of local endemic plants and animal breeds, and genetic purity of other socially or culturally important species.

4.5 Sustainability of results

Finding 18. While FAO has provided important contributions towards developing the national capacities in agricultural sector development and related issues, the current context, challenges, and capacity gaps affect sustainability of results, and require continuation of interventions due to a lack of opportunities for clear exit strategies.

Most FAO interventions are expected to continue, as the Government of Georgia is in the process of further developing its national strategies for agricultural and rural development. While stakeholders believed that projects have integrated effective exit strategies to ensure that government counterparts assume full ownership at the end of the project, the absorption capacity of MEPA and other ministries for several key support measures achieved as well as a challenge with staff retention affected the sustainability of results. There are several examples where FAO has supported the development of action plans and strategies, but there has been limited capacity to subsequently implement the plan or strategy. While the factors affecting lack of implementation capacity are many and complex, this severely affects the sustainability of FAO’s interventions. One of the factors is the ongoing reform processes within the national government institutions.

Limited human and financial capacity is also noted at field project level. The integrated pest management programme lacks funds to engage the existing, and to train new, qualified personnel who have the knowledge and skills to be able to provide farming communities with relevant and effective services in response to local needs. NAITS projects experience similar challenges with the availability of qualified veterinarians in the country to satisfied NAITS needs and insufficient number of new graduates with veterinary services. The sustainability of the NAITS project results will greatly depend on the ability of stakeholders to use NAITS and their awareness about the benefits of doing so. Yet another FAO intervention to set up 25 functioning agro-meteorology stations could face the risk of sustainability of results depending on the decision to assign responsible entities to pay annual fees for the operations of these stations.

For projects that are in the early stages of implementation, the effective cooperation of FAO with MEPA and the degree of stakeholders engagement create preconditions for the results achieved to be sustainable beyond the project cycle. In particular, it is important to highlight the strong commitment of MEPA to fully own the achieved results after the completion of the specific projects. For example, the new phase of the ENPARD project presents a good example of the right balance between the policy support and direct implementation components to ensure the long-term sustainability of the implemented
activities. The alignments of the project with the strategic priorities of MEPA as well as its focus on a systemic approach provides additional basis for future sustainability. In terms of previous phases of the ENPARD, there is a high degree of ownership which can be observed in FAO’s engagement into the agriculture extension system development during ENPARD II. MEPA officially included the agricultural extension system development as one of the main strategic outcomes in the National Agricultural Development Strategy, and the Ministry fully owns the National Agricultural Extension Strategy and its two-year action plan.

4.6 Contributions to cross-cutting issues

4.6.1 Gender

Finding 19. At policy and institutional levels, FAO made a substantial effort to create favourable conditions for gender mainstreaming in the agricultural activities in Georgia.

105 Following the UN normative values and principles, the CPF takes into account the objectives related to gender equality and women’s economic empowerment stated in the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Gender Equality Policy in Georgia in 2014-2016. Outcome 1 of the CPF emphasises support to the relevant institutions for implementing gender-sensitive livelihood support programmes for vulnerable groups including IDPs.

106 In 2015, FAO supported MEPA by providing recommendations for gender mainstreaming into the SADG and including the indicators of success related to gender mainstreaming into the Georgian National Action Plan on Agriculture. These recommendations were not fully utilized as the request for FAO assistance came when the SADG and the action plan were already finalised. The budget allocations to gender, as well as redesigning of major activities to make them more gender responsive, presented a challenge. Nevertheless, some MEPA Agencies, such as the Agricultural Cooperatives Development Agency, provided certain incentives for women and the extension services that increased a number of female specialists in the Agency.

107 In 2018, FAO reinforced its recommendations for gender mainstreaming by including them into the Country Gender Assessment of Georgia. The comprehensive document explores existing gender inequalities in agriculture, their causes, and their impact on the economic and social development of rural areas and on food security and nutrition. The document was widely disseminated and, according to evaluation informants, is often used for gender mainstreaming among partners including MEPA.

108 Another example of gender mainstreaming into policies is FAO’s collaboration with the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refuges of Georgia and UN Women under the project on gender sensitive socioeconomic empowerment of vulnerable IDPs (GCP/GEO/007/EC). It successfully mainstreamed gender in the MRA’s IDP Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2017), MRA Communication Strategy and the IDP Livelihoods Action Plan. A notable achievement was the creation of the position of Gender Adviser and the establishment of the Commission on Gender Equality within the MRA.

109 FAO also provided a number of trainings at governmental level on social inclusion and women’s engagement in agricultural cooperatives, conducted for the Agriculture Cooperative Development Agency, MEPA staff and agricultural cooperatives in 2014 resulting in increased participation of vulnerable groups in cooperatives. FAO has also provided technical support to the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT) to collect high quality sex-disaggregated data, including SDG indicators, for informed policymaking and promotion of female participation in agriculture and agribusiness.

22 In particular, it is in line with the output 3.4 “Promotion of women’s participation in agri-business”, and output 3.5 Women participation in starting and developing agrarian cooperatives.
4. Assessment of FAO’s contributions

FAO is a member of the Gender Theme Group chaired by UN Women where it plays an active role by contributing to the Government efforts in meeting Georgia’s national and international reporting commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)\(^2\) and the SDGs.

Finding 20. For better implementation of gender responsive projects, more efforts and awareness raising are required to further incorporate gender equality and women’s empowerment concepts into the thinking and practices of all stakeholders involved in the project.

At project level, FAO increasingly incorporates gender issues in the project design. Most of FAO’s interventions related to gender contribute to the Objectives of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality: women and men have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources (Objective 2), and women and men have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development, and to markets (Objective 3).

Half of the 24 projects in the Georgia portfolio carry a gender marker. Four projects are marked with the G2a marker suggesting that they address gender equality in a systematic way though this is not the main objective of these projects, while three projects are marked with the G2b marker, thus having gender equality and women’s empowerment as their main objective. Among these projects is the project **GCP/GEO/012/AUS** aiming to strengthen capacities of stakeholders for the implementation of the SADG and the RDSG that addresses gender equality and women’s empowerment through a specifically drafted gender strategy.

In the context of project implementation, the evaluation team found concrete examples of successful gender mainstreaming. For example, the project “**Gender sensitive socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable IDPs through co-funding of their livelihoods opportunities and promotion of their social mobilization (GCP/GEO/007/EC)**”, which carried a G2b marker, was successfully implemented and managed to reach the most vulnerable population groups such as single mothers and persons with disabilities (half of the grant recipients were women). Selection criteria used for identifying the beneficiaries included additional points focused on gender equality.

Mainstreaming of gender into projects is further constrained by existing cultural norms. The RDS acknowledges that the participation of women in decision-making processes at the municipal and community levels is low and that this is conditioned by their own perception that women’s role in society pertains more to activities within the household.

4.6.2 Governance

Finding 21. FAO is continuously engaged in governance-related matters, focusing on policy development, coordination and supporting reform of legal and institutional frameworks.

FAO programmatic efforts are focused on policy discussions leading to development of governance mechanisms and improved decision-making. Stakeholders were of the opinion that practical assistance and advice provided to policymakers by FAO international and national experts, and regular hands-on support and advice provided to the national partners for strengthening their skills and capacities have had noticeable effect on strengthening governance mechanisms. FAO, jointly with national institutions, takes part in all major consultations on agricultural policy issues, particularly with MEPA and its institutions and agencies and actively facilitates the stakeholder collaboration...
processes as an important member of Working Groups, Steering Committees and consultative meetings. ENPARD Stakeholders Steering Committee is currently the widest platform through which all programme cycles contribute to the improved governance.

116 The evaluation team found that all interventions under CPF Priority Area 1, which focus on developing relevant legal and institutional frameworks, directly or indirectly address governance-related issues, assisting the Georgian government in identifying most important governance challenges related to food and agriculture and improving the degree of inclusiveness of its policies and programmes to address them more effectively.

117 Under CPF Priority Area 2, FAO assisted the national institutions in addressing governance issues in interventions targeting development of value chains, extension service models and cooperatives development. In 2017, FAO experts developed new institutional models for the reformation of the wine sector in Georgia, proposing public-private partnership governance models, and contributing to the reform of the National Wine Agency. This was closely linked to strengthening of the Ministry’s capacity regarding the wine value chain policies design and execution. Another example is FAO’s work in developing the Concept Note on Sustainable Forest Management which assists in developing local institutions and organizations to include rural communities into forest’s governance, thus increasing their direct management participation and decreasing their dependency from forest’s resources.

118 Under CPF Priority Area 3, Nationwide Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation has been established which is a legal instrument to help the country prioritize activities and resources to fill capacity gaps and enhance effectiveness of its entire phytosanitary system. Another FAO project under CPF Priority Area 4 “Capacity building for sustainable wildlife management” (TCP/GEO/3603) aims at improving the capacity of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection in Informed and evidence-based decision-making on wildlife-related issues, using a landscape approach and focusing on livelihoods.

4.6.3 Nutrition

Finding 22. Nutrition-specific considerations are not well integrated in the current programme.

119 The evaluation team found very few examples of FAO’s contribution to improving nutrition. While good nutrition remains a challenge for Georgia, the country’s primary focus is on improving institutional reforms related to economic development priorities such as self-sufficiency and exports, as reflected in the SADG. Henceforth, FAO’s activities do not target nutrition-related considerations, being aligned to the priority areas of cooperation jointly agreed with the Government. However, few projects related to value chain development and rural income diversification (e.g. ENPARD III and Women’s Socio-Economic Empowerment) have indirectly influenced the nutritional status of beneficiaries through increased incomes and ability to purchase nutritious foods. Animal health and food safety projects have influenced better nutritional outcomes by decreasing the risks related to foods consumed. However, the evaluation team did not undertake detailed analysis to support these claims.

120 In 2016, Oxfam National Nutrition Research in Georgia assessed the status of nutrition in the country and provided relevant recommendations. The research concluded that while food access is usually not a barrier for a good nutritional outcome, the purchasing ability of certain population groups, general nutrition and diet diversification status, as well as awareness raising related to healthy eating, are issues still to be addressed. The study indicated that future priorities of the Government could include the adoption of the National Nutrition Strategy, improvement of eating habits of schoolchildren and adoption of policies focusing on malnutrition among mothers and children.
4.6.4 Climate change

Finding 23. While FAO is not perceived to be one of the leading agencies in supporting national efforts in climate change adaptation, its programme interventions have effectively integrated climate change adaptation and sustainable natural resource management considerations.

At policy and institutional levels, FAO has promoted and supported integration of the principles of climate-smart agriculture into the RDSG’s Strategy and Action. FAO has also assisted the national institutions in developing institutional capacities for applying climate-smart agriculture practices. At farm level, FAO assisted the Government in demonstrating the potential benefits of good agricultural practices to farmers through training sessions, online videos and comprehensive cultivation guidelines on production of fruits that are commonly produced in Georgia, as well as provision of tools and development of the agrometeorological system. However, based on the stakeholder’s perceptions and assessments, the Ministry is not yet prepared to emphasize implementation of the climate-smart action plan, as it focuses its priorities on other strategies of the RDSG, e.g. rural development. In spite of the important work undertaken, the promotion of sustainable food and agriculture, climate change and biodiversity remain limited in size and scope. Hence, in view of its comparative advantage, FAO attempts to use available opportunities to integrate climate change adaptation in its country programme, yet these opportunities are rare and limited in scope.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. During the current cycle, FAO’s programme was strongly aligned with national development priorities of Georgia, offering strong comparative advantage in providing relevant technical and policy advice in support of strategic priorities and issues, and also effectively responding to government needs and reform agenda. FAO needs to continue this strategic engagement, emphasizing interventions addressing lack of institutional and human resource capacities.

FAO’s interventions to support policy formulation, multidimensional capacity building for MEPA and its agencies, as well as numerous assistance to technical projects within FAO’s mandate were very relevant to address agricultural development challenges of Georgia. Support provided within the current CPF cycle covered almost all seven pillars of the Agricultural Development Strategy. In particular, projects under ENPARD umbrella presented a coherent development plan encompassing policy formulation, ministerial capacity development, building of information systems for decision-making and a value chain development.

To increase ownership and sustainability of project interventions, FAO needs to continue working with the Government to overcome limitations related to the absorption capacities of the national institutions, frequent changes in ministerial structures and overall lack of professionals with needed skills.

Conclusion 2. FAO has made important contributions to the formulation and development of necessary legal and institutional frameworks, policies, strategies and plans for advancing the development of the agricultural sector. The downstream work to support implementation of policies and strategies was less effective, and FAO needs to identify approaches that promote a shift from policy and institutional development to the practical application of these in the field, focusing on areas that offer potential for concrete and feasible results.

FAO’s upstream work on policy development was highly relevant, while the downstream work on implementation was less evident and effective. The ENPARD III project presents a good example of balance between policy support and direct implementation components such as grant schemes for value chain development including contract farming arrangements and public investment scheme support. The project presents innovative approaches for extension services and market access development. At the same time, there is scope for more active engagement by FAO in promoting establishment of cooperatives and supporting Agriculture Cooperatives Development Agency in the achievement of its mandate. In order to succeed in implementing projects that provide direct support to beneficiaries (farmers, farmer associations and cooperatives), FAO needs to strengthen its ability to effectively work at field level and deepen its knowledge in related areas, addressing potential constraints such as limited implementation capacities at local level, lengthy and restrictive financial and administrative procedures for field level work (e.g. in effectively managing grants schemes).

Conclusion 3. In most FAO programmes, sustainability of results achieved is affected by many factors, particularly by the continuing policy changes and institutional reforms, and lack of human and financial resources in relevant national institutions. To ensure longer term sustainability of these results, FAO needs to integrate clear sustainability and exit strategies in its programmes and interventions.
Effectiveness of the majority of ongoing FAO interventions is affected by the likelihoods for longer term sustainability of results. For example, the numerous FAO-led support measures developed for the Ministry’s Policy Unit and the Information and Consultation Centres for Food System and Agricultural Value Chains development are not sufficiently institutionalized and need further follow-up with special attention to application capacity and end-user feedback. At the Information and Consultation Centre level, the extent of incorporation of the tools, systems and technical materials handed over by FAO into the operational infrastructure should be periodically assessed to identify gaps and needs from the end-user perspective (rural communities, individual farmers and other interested groups including private sector actors). The sustainable use of these tools and systems also depends on the management level commitment of national institutions, and availability of necessary resources.

Conclusion 4. FAO will need to step-up its engagement in addressing potential risks and vulnerabilities in the areas of agricultural and rural development, continuing support in plant protection and animal health, focusing on the needs of the most disadvantaged rural population, promoting integration of gender considerations, emphasizing climate change adaptation, environmental sustainability and addressing elements of biodiversity.

In the new cycle FAO needs to play a stronger role in promoting good agricultural practices, biodiversity (e.g. through development and management of endemic genetic resources) and sustainable management of natural resources. Given that the main threats for biodiversity and habitat destruction originate from sectors falling under the FAO core technical expertise, e.g. timber logging, degradation of water ecosystems and intensive grazing, FAO needs to intensify its efforts to promote integration of these issues in its country programme.

Conclusion 5. FAO has had a leading role and contributions in relation to coordination of actors working in the agricultural development and food safety and security, using national coordination mechanisms. FAO needs to fully utilize these opportunities to facilitate achievement of shared vision on issues that are important and urgent, and facilitate pooling of available resources towards these priorities.

Besides partnerships developed for the effective delivery of programme activities, the country office also needs to focus more on establishing linkages and synergies to enhance the collective contribution of actors. FAO should utilize its role in national coordination platforms to bring all relevant actors around the discussion on the need for joint efforts in addressing the most pertinent and urgent issues, and explore all potential complementarities and synergies.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. FAO should focus on interventions supporting the completion of policy and institutional reforms in the agricultural sector, consolidating achievements and supporting the shift from policy and legislative formulation to practical implementation. In doing so, FAO should balance its engagement in field-level project implementation with policy, advocacy and coordination role.

Building upon successful results, FAO should continue focusing on providing policy advice and institutional development support, addressing the gaps in institutional capacities and ensuring continuity of results achieved. While the overall focus of the current programme would most likely be maintained in the new cycle, FAO should increasingly focus on providing its advice and support to the national institutions in moving beyond formulation
of policies and frameworks, and in developing interventions that support tangible contributions towards more effective and sustainable food and agriculture systems.

129 In consultation with key funding partners, FAO should review its strengths and weaknesses in direct implementation of projects targeting development of value chains, agribusinesses and cooperatives, particularly taking into consideration its ability and comparative advantages vis-à-vis other implementing partners (e.g. UN agencies and NGOs).

130 FAO should also critically review its abilities and capacities in delivering necessary services (e.g. grant management programmes or upscaling value chains), and secure necessary support and relevant advice from headquarters technical units and the regional office (Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia - REU). Taking full consideration of its capacities for project implementation and service delivery in different locations, FAO could consider partnering with other actors (e.g. UNDP, civil society, private sector) in delivering these services and joining efforts in mobilizing additional resources from key funding partners.

**Recommendation 2.** FAO needs to step-up its support towards national efforts in setting up and effectively maintaining the systems that address and prevent various risks and vulnerabilities in the agricultural sector, including through enhanced work on plant and animal health services, sustainable agricultural practices emphasizing food safety standards, addressing the gender equality considerations and needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged rural population.

131 FAO should continue to play its critical and leading role in supporting national efforts towards addressing high prevalence of animal zoonotic diseases and pests, and managing risks that pose threats to humans, animals and cause significant losses in agriculture.

132 On the animal health work, FAO should continue its support to national institutions in defining the capacities and resources required for the field level veterinary services and aim at supporting development of strategic plans and budgets for improved delivery of animal health services, improved management of antimicrobials and use of veterinary drugs.

133 In the area of plant protection, FAO should intensify its efforts to promote integrated pest management and sustainable agricultural practices.

134 Building upon successful projects in support of IDPs, in its future interventions supporting rural development FAO should enhance its advisory and technical support targeting most disadvantaged rural population.

**Recommendation 3.** FAO needs to ensure sustainability of results by focusing on solutions for addressing possible constraints and integrating these solutions in the development of new interventions and country programme.

135 In developing future programmes, FAO should pay greater attention to the sustainability of the results achieved, taking into consideration the fast-changing development context. This would require focusing on identifying issues, enabling factors and possible constraints affecting sustainability of its interventions, and using relevant lessons learned in integrating sustainability and exit strategies for the new programmes and mitigating potential risks and constraining factors.

136 For example, in addressing the absorption capacities, ongoing programmes would benefit from the development of workplans with recipient institutions that would take into consideration of current organizational priorities and constraints and identify relevant area of work that offer greater degree of sustainability of results. In addressing financial factors, FAO could consider offering potential alternative mechanisms and solutions to ensure
availability of necessary resources for sustainability of results. For example, within the framework of NAITS project, FAO could propose to the Government potential outsourcing of some veterinary services that are currently solely performed by NFA, and considering the role of the private sector providers.

**Recommendation 4. Building on its comparative advantage and initial pilots, FAO needs to intensify its work in advocating for and demonstration of application of good agricultural practices, work on biodiversity and environmental sustainability programmes.**

137 Given the high vulnerability of agricultural production to climate-induced conditions and events, FAO should promote increased awareness of the linkages between sustainable food and agriculture and climate change adaptation. Considering the leading role of FAO in promoting climate-smart agriculture practices, which also constitute the main priority in Climate Change National Adaptation Plan for Agriculture Sector, FAO could play a more prominent role in promoting good agricultural practices and sustainable management of natural resources. Given that the main threats for biodiversity and habitat destruction originate from sectors falling under the FAO core technical expertise, e.g. timber logging, degradation of water ecosystems and intensive grazing, FAO should consider developing programmes to address these issues within the framework of the new country programme. Important past engagement in biodiversity through development and management of endemic genetic resources should also be continued.

138 FAO should consider developing closer collaboration with other UN agencies and actors working on climate change adaptation, environmental protection and sustainable development, identifying linkages and synergies that could complement its efforts in promoting good agricultural practices and sustainable management of natural resources. In doing so, FAO should assess and prioritize areas of engagement that provide best response to the development challenges at community level.

**Recommendation 5. FAO should fully utilize its leading role in the national coordination mechanisms to identify potential synergies and areas for partnerships that could be forged towards creating multi-actor initiatives, pooling financial and in-kind resources towards achievement of key national priorities.**

139 While Government has been gradually increasing its budgetary support towards development of the agricultural sector, the success of relevant national plans and strategies still depends on significant external financial support. The magnitude of the national reform agenda demands stronger and more extensive collaboration with all potential key stakeholders. Building upon successful examples of joint work and cooperation with UN agencies and key funding partners (European Union, AusAid, SDC), FAO should aim at supporting the Government in designing multi-actor initiatives, offering opportunities for more holistic and comprehensive responses to the national priorities and needs. Using its role in national coordination platforms, FAO could bring together all relevant actors in identifying potential synergies and complementarities in responding to national priorities and needs.

140 This engagement, besides key funding partners, should be extended to civil society organizations, private sector and local research institutions. Sustainability of the ongoing reform processes could be positively influenced by greater inclusion of all relevant actors in discussing reforms and their implementation. The Agriculture Extension Service strategy is an example where private sector could play a bigger role. The recently started ENPARD-III project has elements oriented towards sustainability of outcomes with innovative approaches for extension service and market access development. The main emphasis could be placed on promoting commercialization of the agricultural sector through developing market mechanisms and improving connections with key agricultural market players and businesses. FAO could also promote greater involvement of the private sector in potential outsourcing of some veterinary services by NFA. There is a growing number of local agribusinesses and private associations, which may be considered as potential interested partners, and FAO may consider engaging these associations in field-led activities.
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FAO. Strengthening capacities of stakeholders for the implementation of the Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020 and the Rural Development Strategy of
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## Appendix 1. List of people interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Institution/Agency</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zviad</td>
<td>Asanishvili</td>
<td>National Food Agency (NFA)</td>
<td>Head of the Animal Identification and Registration Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zurab</td>
<td>Chekurashvili</td>
<td>National Food Agency (NFA)</td>
<td>Head of NFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marina</td>
<td>Donduashvili</td>
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<td>Head of Veterinary Laboratory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tatia</td>
<td>Gavasheli</td>
<td>IDP Livelihood Agency (Livelihoods LEPL)</td>
<td>Acting Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>Gelashvili</td>
<td>Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)</td>
<td>Acting Head of Regional Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giorgi</td>
<td>Gonadze</td>
<td>State Representation Administration in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti</td>
<td>Deputy State Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>Gulbani</td>
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<td>Deputy Head of LMA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eter</td>
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<td>Head of Phytosanitary Laboratory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natia</td>
<td>Iordanashvili</td>
<td>National Forestry Agency</td>
<td>Deputy Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tengiz</td>
<td>Kalandadze</td>
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<td>Head of Food Safety, Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<td>Nugzar</td>
<td>Kapanadze</td>
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<td>Head of Information and Consultation Center in Lagodekhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana</td>
<td>Kashakashvili</td>
<td>Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)</td>
<td>Head of Georgian Rural Development Department</td>
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<td>Raimund</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Neven</td>
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<td>Allan</td>
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<td>Matthieu</td>
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<td>Andriy</td>
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<td>FAO HQ</td>
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<td>Javier</td>
<td>Sanz Alvarez</td>
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<td>Artur</td>
<td>Shamilov</td>
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<td>Sokhadze</td>
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### Development Partners

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<th>Institution/Agency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td>Casella</td>
<td>European Union Delegation to Georgia</td>
<td>Attaché on Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demna</td>
<td>Dzirkvadze</td>
<td>United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivane</td>
<td>Grigolashvili</td>
<td>Rural Development for Future Georgia (RDFG)</td>
<td>Chairman of Association Rural Development (RDFG)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irakli</td>
<td>Guledani</td>
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<td>Head</td>
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<td>Jafarli</td>
<td>HEKS/EPER</td>
<td>PROCEED Project Director</td>
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<td>Mercy Corps</td>
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<td>George</td>
<td>Nanobashvili</td>
<td>United Nation Development Programme (UNDP)</td>
<td>Economic development Team Leader, UNDP</td>
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<td>Kateryna</td>
<td>Poberezhna</td>
<td>European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)</td>
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<td>Gerhard</td>
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<td>Konstantine</td>
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### Beneficiaries

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<td>Omar</td>
<td>Alavidze</td>
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Annexes

Annex 1. Terms of Reference