Thematic Evaluation Series

Evaluation of FAO’s contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 2 – “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”

Annex 4. Results from the survey of FAO personnel
Introduction

1. This survey was undertaken to inform the evaluation of FAO’s contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 2 - “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”. The survey collected FAO staff’s perspectives on the organizations’ role in SDG2 work, and how best FAO should move forward.

2. The SDG2 evaluation team in the Office of Evaluation (OED) designed the survey. The team sent out the links of the survey (in English, French and Spanish) on 11 February 2020 to other OED staff, as well as to all HQ and Decentralized Offices (regional, sub regional, country, liaison and field) with the support of the Office of Support to Decentralized Offices (OSD) and the Office of Communications (OCC). The deadline was set for 29 February 2020, thus giving staff three weeks to respond.

3. The survey received a total of 548 responses in the three languages. However, six entries were incomplete and not included in the analysis, which focuses on 542 entries.¹

4. Of the 542 entries that were analyzed, 205 listed their gender as female, 277 as male, while 60 opted not to indicate their gender. By language: 378 responded in English, 72 in French and 92 in Spanish.

¹ Please note that for many of the questions, not all participants responded to the questions. The varying numbers of respondents are indicated against each question.
5. In terms of the typology of roles, the respondents classified their work as contributing to institutional development (23%), provision of direct assistance to food producers, traders, schools etc. (19%), data collection and analyses (15%), as well as knowledge management, communication and dissemination of good practices. Few of the respondents (2%) work in an intersection of all typologies. Other types of work as listed by the respondents include administrative/backstopping functions.

Which of the options below most closely describes your work?
(242 respondents)

- Support to institutional development, governance, coordination and planning
  - 23%
- Data collection and analysis, roll-out and use of indicators to monitor progress
  - 15%
- Assistance to food producers, farmer organizations, traders, schools, etc.
  - 19%
- Knowledge management, communication, dissemination of good practices
  - 14%
- Policy advisory, policy dialogue, advocacy (including local adaptation of SDG targets)
  - 11%
- Mobilization of public and private resources, investment support, promotion of south-south cooperation
  - 5%
- Other
  - 11%
- All
  - 2%

Location of respondents to the questionnaire survey
(533 respondents)

- Country office: 45%
- Field/project office: 4%
- Sub-regional office: 7%
- Regional office: 10%
- Headquaters: 28%
- Various: 5%
- Liaison office: 0%
6. With regards to SDGs, out of 101 respondents who answered the question (and three options available per person), most of them work towards ending poverty, ensuring gender equality, as well as towards zero hunger and sustainable agriculture. This question was placed immediately after the question on SDG2 targets in the questionnaire (“Does your work contribute to specific SDG 2 targets?” presented below), which may explain its low response rate.

7. Specific to SDG2, a majority of the respondents contribute directly to targets 2.1 (66%) and 2.4 (66%), with fewer percentages of respondents spersed between all other targets as shown below. Some 15% of respondents stated they do not directly contribute to any SDG, whereas 4% are unaware of specific SDG2 target(s) to which their work contributes.
8. Out of 440 respondents, 326 agree that FAO effectively communicates its role towards the SDGs, and 297 people feel sufficiently equipped to address the SDGs in their work. Another 280 respondents feel that they can easily access practical tools and tips on how to support the SDGs. More responses are indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree with the following statements? (440 respondents)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAO effectively communicates its role towards the SDGs</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel sufficiently equipped to address the SDGs in my work</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can easily access practical tips and tools on how to support the SDGs</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have received enough guidance from FAO on the SDGs and how to integrate them into my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO needs to make deep changes in order to address the SDGs</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know which unit in FAO to approach for support on the SDGs</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>189</td>
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<td>107</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>52</td>
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9. A disaggregation of the responses shows disparities in responses between respondents from headquarters (HQ) and decentralised offices (DOs): 45% of FAO staff and consultants based at HQ report as having received guidance, against 70% of those based in decentralized offices. Similarly, 60% of staff and consultants in decentralized offices report knowing which unit to consult for support on the SDGs, (versus 47% of HQ staff). Decentralized staff and consultants also have a more positive perception on the way FAO communicates its role towards the SDGs than HQ personnel.

10. However, a similar and high proportion (about 60%) in both groups of respondents (HQ-based and DO-based) believe FAO should make deep changes.
11. Internally, FAO’s collaboration between different technical teams and units, as well as the guidance, training and learning offered especially on SDGs are some of the main factors that may help or hinder FAO’s capacity to support member countries in the achievement of the SDGs.

12. Respondents consider FAO to have made progress in applying core SDG principles such as strengthened partnerships with governments, promoted gender equality and mobilizing resources for its work in agriculture, fisheries and forestry. However, there is room for improvement in areas such as partnerships especially with the private sector, promoting innovation and transformative change, as well as mobilizing more resources for its work streams.

13. Question X in the survey asked “From what you can tell, how does SDG 2 affect demand from Member States for FAO services?” This question was answered by 146 respondents. Many mentioned the necessary transition to sustainable and nutrition-sensitive food systems, dealing with the effects of climate change through CSA and policy support.
Another popular pick was scaling up interventions through partnerships, better interagency collaboration with clarity on where FAO’s comparative strengths are (compared to other UN agencies) in specific countries (and not only at a corporate or regional level); SDG indicators monitoring; and technological innovations.

14. A question on positive and negative factors affecting FAO’s performance (question 8) did not work well, as the formulation was ambiguous.

15. When asked which new capacities would be required, respondents listed FAO’s technical capacities in areas of agriculture, nutrition, and natural resource management, as well as project design and management skills as some of the strongest within the organization, and operational capacities such as human resource management, procurement, contracting and administration as the weakest and most in need of improvement.

16. Amongst the challenges that respondents listed as potential weaknesses for FAO, some proposals were made as potential new skills sets and technical competencies that the organization could hire to complement its current capacity, especially with regards to SDG 2. Main suggestions included the following:

i. A stronger monitoring, evaluation and learning function within FAO.

ii. Integrated approaches of FAO’s work (e.g. from “field to fork”) and applying systems thinking and a multi-disciplinary /cross departmental approach to FAO’s work.

iii. Engagement with national and local authorities as well as communities to facilitate the required changes from policy to practice.

iv. Strengthened capacities of and a more effective use of FAO’s technical competence and skills.

v. Facilitate joint work with other (UN) agencies for better results.
vi. Strengthen the commitment of FAO’s staff members to support the objective and mission of the SDGs, including SDG2.


viii. Media outreach to raise awareness about FAO’s work to more audiences.

ix. (More focus on) human and social sciences.

x. Making use of agricultural techniques adapted to e.g. climate change, nutritional education, access to local products, use of new technologies and renewable energies.

17. Many of the respondents propose that FAO does not need to hire more people as they consider it to have enough capacity. For these respondents, it is a matter of how FAO is using these capacities and resources that are already in place (e.g. decentralization of technical officers, promote capacity development on a regular basis, better management skills, less bureaucracy, more cooperation between units, better use of decentralized technical officers and consultants).

While some argued that there are no “quick wins”, the following (aggregate) actions were recommended to FAO if it is to accelerate progress in countries lagging behind their SDG 2 targets:

1. **FAO should move away from small dispersed projects, and towards comprehensive largescale evidence-based innovative and integrated flagship programmes that have a greater influence.**
   i. Work on the level of structural causes, not on the level of symptoms.
   ii. Quality Management experts should design and ensure hands-on implementation of projects/initiatives.
   iii. Take advantage of already existing partners resources in the areas to be able to act quickly in impact situations. "many little ants working with impact”.

2. **Intensify support to national authorities**
   i. FAO should no longer remain in the political and strategic concepts; but become more practical.
   ii. FAO should work more closely with countries, valuing and drawing on their experience and knowledge, and not overlook the key aspects that can undermine participation and decision-making at the country level.
   iii. Build the institutional relationships and intersectoral structures needed for sustainable, effective governance.
   iv. More intensively engage with national and provincial governments; develop sustainable models that can be replicated worldwide
   v. Listen and respect: value the inputs from less powerful countries. Take care to avoid letting the donors set the agenda.
   vi. Greater integration of technical HQ teams with the regions and joint contact with the territories.
vii. Get a better understanding of its clients, and of the realities of the populations they wish to support.

3. **Coordinate with other UN Agencies** to avoid repetition and overlapping of programs and initiatives.
   
i. Discuss with IFAD to make it the Financing Agency of FAO projects instead of being a stand-alone agriculture financing institution as it is now. Have multi-lateral meetings with other RBAs and understand which tasks can work together - whether it is "school-feeding" programme in WFP or the "Farmer Field Schools" which FAO has been excellent at promoting for example. Similarly, have the Technical divisions meet together and present their good practices and highlight where they would need the other’s support.
   
ii. Join forces with already existing good practices. Do a mapping of what is already being done by local NGOs, UN agencies, Cooperatives. There is no need to "re-invent" the wheel, FAO should team up and work together with others as one UN in its efforts towards supporting member countries within the next 10 years. These collaborations have to be linked to a strong social media presence to ensure the public is aware of these collaborations.

4. **Increase internal efficiency** to better support countries / implement activities faster etc.
   
i. Reduce administrative bottlenecks specifically in the recruitment and selection of personnel needed.
   
ii. Streamline internal management arrangements for programme and project implementation.
   
iii. FAO should have a more streamlined vision. Some of the respondents feel that FAO cannot do everything for all countries, and should instead focus on what it can do, and do that really well. As one respondent puts it: "(FAO should) focus on where we can actually make a difference and cut out all other pretenses".
   
iv. FAO lacks a mechanism or a process to link or connect its mandated commitments with its technical capacity. E.g., FAO has committed itself to specific missions for which it has never established an effective approach to regularly ensure the required capacity to achieve these missions is maintained.
   
v. Staff skills need to be matched to the posts.

5. **Decentralization**
   
i. FAO should shift its operations to the country level, instead of concentrating all its efforts to work at the global policy level. The UNDP model (with a very strong presence in all countries, complemented by a relatively small HQ and regional offices) should be considered as a possible model to revisit the organizational structure of FAO, towards effectiveness and efficiency enhancement.
   
ii. Focus on big initiatives in each country that can make a dent on SDGs.
   
iii. Better define priorities at the national level based on evidence from studies.
   
iv. Bring technical understanding of achieving SDG2 targets to government counterparts.
   
v. Decentralize the SP Units for them to better focus on specific challenges by regions (Africa, Asia, Middle East Latin America & Europe) and produce tailored technical recommendations.
vi. FAO needs more people with country-level experience who understand governance and policy processes at the country level. For example, there is much talk about the potential for more and improved data to guide policy, but little understanding of how data is actually used by decision makers and what steps can and should be taken to improve the link between information and policy.

vii. FAO’s presence at the country level should be strengthened by allocating more human resources, and making sure these are adequately skilled and motivated. The FAO decentralization process should be accelerated, and it should be targeted to enhance country offices. As of today, the strengthening of regional and sub-regional offices since 2010 has not been effective to meet the increasing country needs and demands regarding SDG2 and other SDGs.

viii. Empower Regional and sub-regional offices with adequate human capital/resources

ix. Deployment of highly technical experts in line ministries to enable the empowerment process of local Human Resources/Capital.

x. Establish country-dedicated teams at regional and HQ levels for targeted priority countries (with adequate funding and human resources) to invest massively in the batch 1 countries and achieve results in the short time left for SDG 2.

xi. Strengthen country offices’ capacity to respond timely to national solicitations.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
Introduce a harmonized system of periodic monitoring, reporting and dissemination to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and necessary adjustments, reaching a target audience with more voracity.

i. Assign an M&E unit to collect data and facilitate the exchange and transfer of knowledge for necessary adjustments.

ii. A regular tally of where nations are in their transition to sustainable practices, identifying factors contributing to the lag.

iii. Bring in and support countries in scaling up applicable innovations.

iv. Capitalize on ICTs/Digitalization initiatives.

v. Prepare a scorecard related to country progress, allowing comparative cross country comparisons and examples of good practices/policies that were instrumental in speeding up progress, with much greater clarity on truly transformational cases.

vi. Hold an SDG 2 Summit to take stock of where (FAO and countries) are 10 years before 2030 and what is needed to speed things up.

7. FAO should become a more agile organization. (Currently), FAO is too rigid and inward looking.

i. E.g. use platforms such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) which has bi-annual heads of states meetings to make progress in the policy areas in respect to SDG 2.

ii. Use the Hand-in-Hand Initiative to leverage the support from the Global North and South for these countries.

8. Capacity development and support programs for staff.
i. E.g. include capacity development components throughout the project cycle: TCPs should include an “on-the-job” training in addition to the great training courses and practical, field-based training that FAO is giving. Such direct job mentoring would accelerate improvement in the capacities of all staff (including government), especially those working on SDG 2 related programmes.

ii. Establish the main technical areas and their related national institutions that require capacity building and expansion. Develop a specific support program to mitigate gaps through the implementation of partnerships with national public-private entities, international organizations and donor agencies. Based on scientific evidence and supported by adequate advocacy, encourage political and governmental commitment to the initiatives.

iii. All new FAO staff should be trained on FAO’s working processes, organizational structure, and decision-making mechanisms.

9. **Create better staff welfare conditions**
   
i. Better manage human resources to provide teams with greater stability
   
ii. Reduce levels of bureaucracy, especially in procurement and recruitment processes
   
iii. Eliminate stress that is not work-related, e.g. for a staff with a contract of 1 month, 2 months etc., it is difficult to concentrate properly for work.

10. **Advocacy**
   
i. FAO should step up on its advocacy for human-rights-based approaches and empower the poor so they can be heard in policy discussions at the national level.
   
ii. (Advocate for the) introduction of SDGs /SDG 2 in school curricula.
   
iii. Advocacy with governments regarding certain policy changes required to support SDG 2 and the 2030 Agenda.
   
iv. Build a positive narrative on human mobility/migration (rural/urban-across countries)
   
v. Promote a paradigmatic shift in knowledge management and extension, from linear learning to co-creation of knowledge based on indigenous knowledge.

11. **Be innovative/ promote good practices**
   
i. Mainstream nutrition, food safety, sustainable food systems, and income generation for farming communities in all its activities.
   
ii. Greater relationship of sustainability projects with schools and high schools.
   
iii. Support urban agriculture initiatives.
   
iv. Promote responsible and sustainable agriculture, and prevent ultra-intensive agriculture with a commercial logic and harmless for the environment.
   
v. Become more involved in the field of nutrition and therefore develop a partnership at country and sub-regional level for joint programmes with nutrition stakeholders.
   
vi. Use of ICT and technology trends (big data, AI) for information analysis.
   
vii. Provide more support for web-based communication and data visualization.
12. **Communication, accountability and transparency:**
   i. Clearly communicate FAO’s role in support of SDG 2, as well as its understanding of SDG2.
   ii. Avoid "SDG wishful thinking", clearly communicate the gigantic challenges ahead.
   iii. Do a revamp of leadership and mid-management roles to have people who can think, act and mobilize more dynamically and strategically, and who can groom younger employees.
   iv. FAO could disclose its actions more, beyond the walls of the organization itself. A lot of it is hidden internally/in FPMIS - not published or circulated to governments and yet FAO has achieved so much.
   v. Information needs to be assessed against indicators at the micro/country level and shared with countries - particularly those who do not have the capacity to gather information (e.g. SIDS).
   vi. Simplify and reduce the number of messages, advocacy products and events. Let FAO provide coherent guidance with one voice with practical and understandable guidelines. i.e. publications and advocacy materials should be checked at corporate level to avoid the proliferation of products on the same topics, with messages that are not always coherent.

13. **Improve on overlooked areas of work**
   i. Mainstream nutrition, food safety, sustainable food systems, and income generation for farming communities in all its activities
   ii. Food Waste and Food Loss component should be improved as it is somehow missing in most plans.
   iii. Work with polluters and processed food producers to impact the real economy
   iv. FAO needs to invest more in agricultural governance with a focus on quality production and markets.
   v. Implementing development programmes of at least 5 to 7 years) for agriculture (input support, infrastructure, market development) and reduce its emergency interventions.
   vi. FAO needs to return to wholeheartedly embracing and promoting climate-smart agriculture (CSA). The fundamental ideas behind, and pillars of, CSA are integral to achieving many of the SDGs and definitely SDG2.
   vii. Take into consideration climate change mitigation factors in all aspects of FAO’s work.
Appendix 1. Questionnaire (English version)
FAO’s Contribution to SDG 2 - A Survey of FAO Personnel

The FAO Office of Evaluation is currently conducting an evaluation of FAO’s contribution to SDG 2 - “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”.

We would like to collect information and recommendations from FAO staff and consultants working at all levels of the organization, in country, sub-regional and regional offices, as well as at headquarters and in various liaison offices.

We are particularly interested in receiving feedback from those of you directly working on SDG 2 targets and/or on the many interconnections between SDG 2 and other SDGs. However, your feedback will also be welcome if your work does not specifically relate to SDG 2 at present.

The audience for this questionnaire is therefore quite wide. Please share the questionnaire with any present or past FAO employee or consultant who you think can provide useful input.

The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete. All individual responses will be kept strictly confidential. Kindly respond no later than (date xxxx).

For any clarifications, please email olive.zgambo@fao.org. Thank you very much for your feedback.

1. Personal data
Kindly tell us about yourself. This information is optional but will help us understand your feedback.

Name
Email address
Function/Role
Location

2. Briefly describe your area of work, and how it relates or contributes to SDG 2?
If your work does not relate to SDG 2, your feedback is still most welcome. Just answer: "No relation"

3. Which of the roles listed below most closely describes your work?
Tick all that apply.
- Policy support, i.e. support to the development, implementation and evaluation of national or regional policy frameworks
- Capacity building, institutional development
- Support to monitoring of development indicators, reporting against the SDG
Results from the survey of FAO personnel

- Direct assistance to communities, food producers and private operators
- Experimentation, documentation and dissemination of good development practices
- Knowledge management, communication, awareness raising, training, advocacy
- Financing for sustainable development, investment support, resource mobilization
- Mobilization of partnerships, coordination, aid coherence, ‘whole of government’ approach

Other (please specify):

4. Does your work contribute to specific SDG 2 targets?
Tick all that apply - tick none if your work does not contribute to SDG 2 - you can mention other SDGs in the last box if needed.

- 2.1 End hunger and ensure access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food
- 2.2 End all forms of malnutrition
- 2.3 Double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers
- 2.4 Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices
- 2.5 Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, animals and their related wild species
- 2.A Increase investment in rural infrastructure and agricultural research and services to enhance agricultural productive capacity
- 2.B Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets
- 2.C Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets
- My work contributes to other SDGs (please specify)

5. Do you agree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have received enough guidance from FAO on the SDGs and how to integrate them into my work</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO provides strong support to National Statistics Offices to help them roll out new SDG indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Strategic Framework and its 5 Strategic Objectives help FAO staff address the SDGs, since they are quite similar in nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Strategic Framework and its 5 Strategic Objectives hinder the capacity of FAO staff to address the SDGs, since they represent a competing framework</td>
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<td>I know which unit in FAO to approach for support on the SDGs</td>
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13
**Corporate communication channels (FAO website, flagship reports, etc.) describe effectively the opportunities and challenges faced by countries to achieve the SDGs:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
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**Corporate communication channels effectively convey FAO’s role in helping countries achieve the SDGs**

6. **For FAO, the SDGs are an opportunity to...**

Tick all that apply.

- Pay more attention to the environmental sustainability of food systems
- Become more people-oriented and socially-conscious, to “leave no one behind”
- Build up its presence in developed countries, since the SDGs are universal
- Focus its support on a smaller number of countries that really need it
- Strengthen its partnerships with the private sector
- Strengthen its partnerships with civil society
- Strengthen its partnerships with governments
- Mobilize support and resources for agriculture
- Mobilize more resources for its programmes
- None of the above -- ‘old wine in new bottle’

Other (please specify):

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7. From what you can tell, how do the SDGs affect demand from member states for FAO services?

Less demand for...

More demand for...

8. What **internal** factors influence FAO’s capacity to support Member Countries towards the achievement of the SDGs?

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<tr>
<th>Very negative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No influence</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Very positive</th>
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</table>

- Knowledge, guidance, training and learning within FAO on SDGs
- Coherence of Strategic Framework with SDG Agenda
- Organisational structure and institutional mechanisms
- Human and/or financial resources
- Collaboration between different technical teams and units
### Results from the survey of FAO personnel

| Collaboration between different levels (HQ - Regional - National) |
| Collaboration with other Rome-Based Agencies (IFAD, WFP) |
| Readiness to engage with the current UN reform at country level |
| Operational capacities (e.g. administration, HR, procurement, contracting, operations, etc.) |
| Technical capacities (e.g. in agriculture, nutrition, natural resources, etc.) |
| Capacities in knowledge management, evaluation, accountability and learning |
| Relational capacities (e.g. in resource mobilization, partnerships, communication, etc.) |
| Other (please specify): |

#### 9. What external factors may influence FAO's contribution towards the achievement of the SDGs?

| Level of national ownership of the SDGs |
| Priority afforded to agriculture, food and nutrition security by governments |
| Volume of Official Development Assistance available in country |
| Extent of national resources available, fiscal space |
| National capacity to implement programmes and policies |
| Corporate social responsibility efforts by the private sector |
| National capacities to monitor and report against SDG indicators |
| Conflict, political instability |
### Evaluation of FAO’s contribution to SDG2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Economic growth</th>
<th>Very negative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>No influence</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Very positive</th>
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<td>Demographic growth and changes (e.g. migration, youth bulge)</td>
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<td>Regional economic integration</td>
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<td>Global trade agreements</td>
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10. **Can you list some of the products or best practices that FAO should scale up to better address SDG 2?**

11. **Are there some products or services that FAO could stop doing or disengage from in the SDG era?**

12. **What else should FAO do to better support Member Countries’ efforts towards the achievement of SDG 2?**