

# Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 2 - "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture"

Phase 2

**Thematic Evaluation Series**  
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**Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Sustainable  
Development Goal 2 - "End hunger, achieve food  
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**Phase 2**

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

DLIS	Desert Locust Information System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer field school
FNS	Food and nutrition security
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LNOB	Leave no one behind
RBA	Rome-based Agency
RWEE	Rural Women's Economic Empowerment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSTC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security
WFP	World Food Programme

# Executive summary

## Introduction

1. The Evaluation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) Contributions to Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2 evaluation) was conceived as a 'formative' evaluation as it tries to assess a programme of work that is still taking shape. It was a complex exercise strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The report accounts for the second and final phase of the evaluation, mainly conducted through country case studies (CCS) and reviews of key FAO products and services under SDG 2. The report from the first phase was presented at the 128th session of the Programme Committee in May 2020 (see <http://www.fao.org/3/nc852en/nc852en.pdf>).

## List of findings

### Overview of Phase 2 results

3. An estimated 91 percent of the FAO project portfolio addresses SDG 2 and its links with other SDGs, about two-thirds of which focus on the food production part of SDG 2 (Targets 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5), and one-third focuses on food consumption (Targets 2.1 and 2.2).
4. Projects specifically dedicated to Target 2.5 on biodiversity are rare, but the theme is addressed (among others) in a quarter of the reviewed practices in country.
5. Many projects are of a small size, have not yet matured into visible good practices and are often focused on food production.
6. The farmer field schools (FFS) approach and its derivatives (Farmer Business Schools, *Caisses de Résilience*, etc.) feature prominently among FAO good practices and have been widely adopted by other development actors, including formal extension services.
7. In some of the reviewed interventions, FAO has been providing support for two decades. Development takes time.
8. Innovations in FAO have spread slowly from one region to the next.
9. There is a noticeable trend towards more holistic approaches, a broadening of scope and a diversification of FAO products.

## Progress in addressing key principles of the 2030 Agenda

### Interconnections, synergies, trade-offs and sustainability

10. FAO contributed significantly to the design of SDG 2, rooted in the food systems approach, and more generally to the comprehensive and interconnected 2030 Agenda.
11. Translating this rich and complex agenda into practice will be a challenge, as there is a tendency to embrace too much complexity.
12. Some of the reviewed areas of work have already integrated the need to 'boil down' complex thinking into simple, actionable messages, such as agroecology and its 10 Elements.
13. The progress achieved in the transition towards more sustainable agriculture is currently limited to a small number of countries.
14. Territorial approaches focusing on a specific region can help reduce complexity.

15. A good way of addressing linkages and trade-offs while avoiding “analysis paralysis” is to identify entry points that resonate with local needs, and helping stakeholders explore the various consequent ramifications within the local context.

### **Leaving no one behind**

16. The “leave no one behind” (LNOB) principle has not been properly delineated nor communicated within FAO. Noteworthy initiatives in terms of social inclusion tend to remain “islands of success” promoted by discrete individuals.
17. FAO’s work towards SDG 2 Targets 2.1 and 2.2 (e.g. legal and parliamentary work on food and nutrition security) is more socially inclusive than its work towards Targets 2.3 and 2.4 on food production.
18. Even programmes delivering public goods (e.g. management of transboundary pests) can “leave no one behind”, by improving equity and solidarity between poor and rich nations through fair, collaborative and technically competent forums of exchange and coordination.
19. The establishment of the Office for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) (OSL) reinforces FAO’s commitment to combat inequalities amongst countries, to leave no nation behind.

### **Acting at scale**

20. Many FAO projects at country level are of a small size, due to the lack of a programme approach in FAO as well as the tendency to fund small, impermanent pilot projects. Nevertheless, a number of initiatives already acting at scale are highlighted in the report.
21. Supporting national initiatives is a better way to act at scale than pilot projects. Other modes of intervention with potential to act at scale are legal and policy support, regional programmes, support to investment, climate finance, South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC), and education.
22. Education of producers, traders and consumers is central to the transition towards sustainable food systems. This presents an entry point towards leveraging and strengthening national education systems.
23. The depth and breadth of partnerships in country is growing in some countries, often those with the best programmes.
24. A few initiatives notwithstanding, partnerships with the private sector remain insufficient to achieve an impact on food systems.

### **Harnessing innovations for development**

25. The most advanced areas in terms of innovation and digital technologies are the Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS), the Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS), as well as access to satellite imagery.
26. FAO is improving its provision of rich developmental data in open access and the development of telephone applications.
27. FAO has started to use social media to reach a wide audience and support a large-scale transformation of agriculture.

## **FAO's comparative strengths**

### **Structures and products**

28. FAO's complex governance structure allows for close engagement with Members but also reinforces compartmentalization.
29. Existing integrative products are at a disadvantage in terms of finding a stable institutional home in the FAO sectorial structure.
30. Regional offices and programmes play an important role to promote integrative solutions and approaches, though interregional exchanges appear limited.

### **Capacities**

31. The core of FAO's strength lies in its technical capacity on a wide range of relevant topics. This technical capacity has been eroded by budget cuts in many areas under SDG 2.
32. Lesser capacities were reported in non-technical domains, such as in legal, policy, economic and social fields, and in knowledge management.
33. Insufficient operational capacity at country level has eroded the demand for FAO technical support and the relevance of the agency in the eye of Members and donors.
34. Current project cycle management and controls lead to a fragmented portfolio with high transaction costs, insufficient strategic oversight and poor visibility of achieved results.
35. FAO is generally perceived as close to the Ministry of Agriculture. Less contact and collaborations were reported with other ministries, local government and non-state actors.

### **Knowledge**

36. Horizontal information sharing and co-creation of knowledge are progressively replacing the top-down diffusion from a central body of knowledge.
37. In the absence of formal tools for knowledge management, knowledge is shared 'organically' through networks of colleagues and partners which can easily form silos.
38. The Organization has tended to provide technical assistance in a top-down manner, not facilitating horizontal transfers of knowledge and often failing to build upon field experience.
39. The evaluation identifies a difficulty to translate knowledge from one "cultural sphere" to the next, which could be due to linguistic and other cultural differences.

### **Financial and other resources**

40. Voluntary contributions and SSTC have grown in recent years but remain reliant on a small base of resource partners.
41. Climate resilience is an area of growth, e.g. through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and several large Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposals signed over the past few years. FAO is in a unique position to design applications for such funds.

### **United Nations reforms and Rome-based Agency collaboration**

42. United Nations reform and Rome-based Agencies (RBA) collaboration are seen as opportunities to strengthen FAO's position and to scale-up FAO approaches at country level.
43. The United Nations reform demands greater decision-making power and financial autonomy for the FAO representations in country.

44. RBA collaboration is offset at the moment by competition and high transaction costs. While the three RBAs share a common agenda, they approach it from intrinsically different mandates.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

**Conclusion 1.** FAO is well positioned at the global level and is committed to support the SDGs. Significant progress has been achieved on communicating FAO's role internally and externally. FAO has engaged with the current United Nations reform – strongly connected to the SDGs – with a very collaborative attitude.

**Conclusion 2.** FAO's position is weaker at the national level, due to a limited programmatic footprint, poor operational culture and excessive reliance on small pilot projects. Administrative delays have eroded FAO's reputation, the demand for its technical support, and the perceived relevance of the agency at country level.

- **Recommendation 1.** In the context of the SDGs, weak operational capacity in FAO Country Offices represents a strategic liability that needs systemic attention and strengthening over the long-term.

**Conclusion 3.** Many of the reviewed national projects were of a small size, but FAO is acting at scale when it supports national initiatives and programmes, legal and policy initiatives, regional programmes, investment in food systems, climate finance, United Nations collaboration, SSTC and education. Nevertheless, partnerships with the private sector as well as mobilization of domestic resources remain insufficient to impact food systems.

- **Recommendation 2.** FAO must strengthen its operational skills, programmatic tools and implementation modalities, including through the introduction of programme approach, to mobilize more voluntary contributions, spend them well and give some visibility to the results.
- **Recommendation 3.** Closer links to the private sector, producer and consumer organizations, education and research institutes and philanthropic organizations are needed to act at scale. The due diligence process could be adapted to the level of risk and hence to the size of the private entity involved.
- **Recommendation 4.** Beyond advocating for greater resource allocation to agriculture and food systems, there is a need to improve upon policy, legal and educational environments to make them more coherent and more conducive to private investment, and to systematically strengthen the institutional capacity and resource efficiency in related line ministries.

**Conclusion 4.** The principle of "leave no one behind" applies universally and is fundamental to FAO's value added. Nevertheless, it has yet to be systematically mainstreamed into FAO's programmes and knowledge products. Some progress was recorded on gender equality but not for other groups. Socially inclusive processes offer a strategic entry point for FAO to contribute to fair and sustainable investment.

- **Recommendation 5.** Step up efforts to mainstream the principle of "leave no one behind" into programmes, communication and knowledge products, and to delineate what it can do, what entry points to use for each vulnerable group. It is important for FAO leadership to support this principle, lead its systematic integration and communicate its value to Members.

- **Recommendation 6.** FAO should develop diversified strategies to help provide employment to the youth in food systems, building upon the youth's desire for environmental sustainability, fairer markets and trade, modernization and radical change.
- **Recommendation 7.** A stronger policy engagement is required to address the trade-offs between economic growth, equity and environmental sustainability. In particular, FAO should try and use to a greater extent the set of voluntary guidelines emanating from its Governing Bodies and promote them at country level as an integral part of FAO's value added.

**Conclusion 5.** Translating the rich agenda of SDG 2 into practice is challenging, as there is a tendency to embrace too much complexity, thus dissipating energies and resources. Approaches that use a clear, focused entry point (such as a region in the case of territorial approaches, or a specific law, or a particular social group) can help stakeholders address the complex ramifications of this single entry point in a number of social, economic and environmental dimensions without verging into "analysis paralysis".

- **Recommendation 8.** FAO must better tailor its global approaches to local contexts, and identify focused entry points, preferably through existing national and local priorities, policies and programmes.
- **Recommendation 9.** Protecting and conserving biodiversity are key to preventing the spread of pathogens that could affect food and nutrition security. FAO should expand its work in this area.
- **Recommendation 10.** To accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems, use markets to valorize sustainable agricultural practices and products, through bio-certification schemes, etc.

**Conclusion 6.** Knowledge management in FAO does not support participatory and transversal learning. The transition to sustainable development is knowledge-intensive and calls for modes of knowledge creation and exchange, able to valorize the knowledge of local actors, including that of smallholders themselves. FAO has spearheaded this transition, e.g. through the FFS, but its knowledge management practices remain fragmented. In the absence of formal tools, knowledge is shared through networks that can easily form silos. This may explain a certain difficulty to learn from mistakes, to translate knowledge from one "cultural sphere" to the next, and to broadly replicate successful and relevant initiatives.

- **Recommendation 11.** An explicit, integrated knowledge management approach is required to help bridge cross-divisional divides, enhance interactions between headquarters, regional, subregional and country offices, and facilitate learning. A key element is to connect across countries and regions, and to build knowledge on what is already happening in the field.
- **Recommendation 12.** Social media applications, digital innovations and information systems should be supported in a more service-oriented manner by corporate services.
- **Recommendation 13.** FAO information systems should be geared to support the analytical base of FAO and partners at the country level, rather than have all the information centralised and analysed at headquarters.

**Conclusion 7.** The new FAO Strategic Framework provides an opportunity to promote and communicate FAO's role in a more coherent and joined-up manner, aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The current Strategic Framework has encouraged a more integrated, cross-disciplinary way of

working. However, there is still a need for greater integration of the key principles of the 2030 Agenda, for knowledge exchange and collaboration between sectors and regions, and for more robust and pragmatic means of implementation.

- **Recommendation 14.** FAO's Strategic Framework should be revised to speak more directly to the SDGs and delineate the key principles of the 2030 Agenda as well as FAO's role in implementing them. It presents an opportunity to define a comprehensive accountability mechanism for implementing the desired change, and to develop a harmonized monitoring system covering both voluntary and assessed contributions.
- **Recommendation 15.** Acting at scale, promoting holistic approaches and leaving no one behind require additional technical and functional capacities that are currently insufficient within FAO, such as lawyers, policy analysts, sociologists, operations managers, and experts with a strong field experience.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose, scope and objectives

1. At its 125th session, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Programme Committee requested an evaluation of FAO's contributions to Sustainable Development Goal 2 - "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture" - SDG 2 evaluation (FAO, 2018).<sup>1</sup>
2. The SDG 2 evaluation was conceived as a 'formative' evaluation in that it aims to assess a programme of work that is still taking shape. The following objectives were identified:
  - i. assess FAO's past and present work on SDG 2-related areas to identify good practices that should be expanded, areas for improvement, and potential gaps that need to be filled;
  - ii. understand FAO's positioning and its comparative strengths and weaknesses on SDG 2, and opportunities for strengthening its delivery;
  - iii. explore the best options going forward to strengthen FAO's approach, partnerships and programmes in support of SDG 2;
  - iv. serve as a baseline for future assessments pertaining to FAO's support to SDG 2.
3. Three overarching evaluation questions – each further detailed in the terms of reference (Annex 1) – were derived from extensive engagement with FAO management and staff, as well as some external stakeholders such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Programme (WFP) management, as follows:
  - A. Is FAO positioning itself to offer relevant support to countries in achieving their SDG 2 targets?
  - B. To what extent is FAO transforming its delivery mechanisms and programmes (or should transform them) to better support countries in achieving SDG 2 targets?
  - C. How is FAO collaborating with others to support countries in achieving their SDG 2 targets?
4. The evaluation covers the period from June 2012 to December 2019 with a stronger focus on the period from 2016 onward, when the 2030 Agenda came into force. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) is reporting this SDG 2 evaluation in two parts: i) at the 128th session; and ii) at the 129th session.<sup>2</sup> The first phase focused on FAO's corporate structures, programmes and delivery mechanisms, i.e. some of the transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda. The second phase searched for good practices at regional and country levels that might be relevant to scale-up and explore FAO's efforts in addressing the collaborative elements of the 2030 Agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> Considering that the SDGs are country-led and country-owned, FAO's contributions to SDG2 should be understood as FAO's support to Members in setting and achieving their SDG2 targets. Based on FAO's mandate, most of what FAO does in support to SDG2 could also apply to other SDGs. For further information, please consult the evaluation terms of reference (Annex 1) and detailed theory of change (Annex 7).

<sup>2</sup> As endorsed by the Programme Committee at its 127th session (FAO, 2019).

5. This report accounts for the second phase of the evaluation, which commenced in March 2020. It builds upon the results from Phase 1 conducted in 2019. The report draws overall conclusions and recommendations from both phases of the evaluation.

## 1.2. Scope and objectives of the second phase

6. The second phase aimed to i) test and update the conclusions of the first phase regarding results achieved at the regional and country level; ii) bring better granularity to the evaluation findings; and iii) highlight good practices that could be upscaled and lessons that could be learned on how FAO may redesign or reframe its work to support Members in accelerating progress towards the achievement of SDG 2.
7. A number of ongoing Office of Evaluation (OED) evaluations overlap with the broad scope of the SDG 2 evaluation, notably the ongoing or soon-to-come evaluations of SDG 13 on Climate Action, SDG 6 on Water, SDG 5 on Gender, etc. The scope of the SDG 2 evaluation took this into consideration, for instance by largely excluding FAO's work on Climate Change from its scope.

## 1.3. Methodology

8. More than a thousand people contributed to this evaluation. Evaluation team members personally interviewed 800 persons (see Annex 2). In addition, 542 FAO staff and consultants have responded to the evaluation survey.<sup>3</sup> The number of documents reviewed is estimated at 945 (see Annex 3).
9. The evaluation used two primary tools to explore its vast scope:
  - i. 15 country case studies (CCS) sampled during Phase 1, with the purpose of exploring good practices that may deserve upscaling (Table 1); and
  - ii. 14 'signature products reviews' to assess how they contribute to SDG 2 and their potential for upscaling (Table 2).

**Table 1: Country Case Studies**

Asia and the Pacific	Bangladesh, Fiji, Nepal and Philippines
Europe and Central Asia	Georgia and Turkey
Latin America and the Caribbean	Colombia, Costa Rica and Ecuador
Near East and North Africa	Morocco and Sudan
Sub-saharan Africa	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde and Rwanda

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<sup>3</sup> Duplicates between the survey respondents and persons interviewed are likely.

**Table 2: Signature Products**

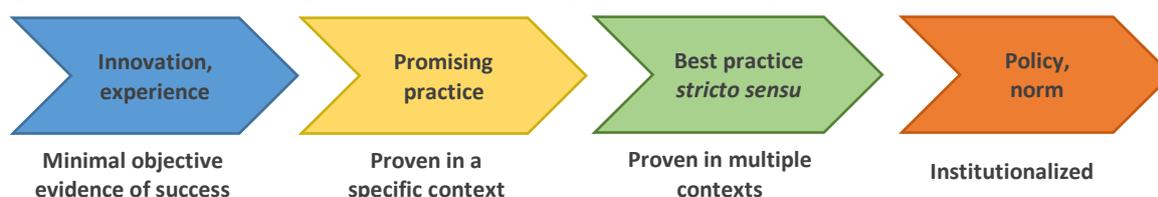
1	Legal and parliamentary work on food and nutrition security (FNS)
2	Nutrition education
3	Support to value chain development
4	Support to secure tenure of natural resources through the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) and small-scale fisheries (SSF)
5	Farmer field schools (FFS) and their derivatives
6	Control of transboundary diseases and pests
7	Agroecology
8	Protection and fair share of genetic resources for food and agriculture
9	South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)
10	Support to agricultural investment
11	Support to fair and informed commodity markets and international trade
12	Rural women's empowerment
13	Urban food agenda
14	Aquaculture promotion and Blue Growth

10. Climate-smart agriculture was originally considered as a 'signature product' but it is shaping up as a central topic in the evaluation on FAO's Contributions to SDG 13, which will be presented to the Programme Committee at its 130th session. For this reason, it was not reviewed in the SDG 2 evaluation.
11. The countries and signature products were purposefully sampled during Phase 1 by the evaluation team based on their actual or potential contributions to accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG 2. In each country, another sample of two or three "good practices" was drawn from the country programme and analysed in depth. To the extent possible, these practices were cross-referenced to the 'signature products'.<sup>4</sup>
12. The focus on good practices stemmed from the formative purpose of the evaluation; i.e. learning-oriented as opposed to accountability-oriented. Nevertheless, a thorough assessment of challenges and limitations to advance FAO's support to Members was conducted within the scope of these case studies, as well as an assessment of FAO's partnerships and comparative strengths in relation to SDG 2. Both categories of case studies were conducted in close collaboration with their respective technical teams and country offices. Reports containing specific findings, conclusions and recommendations were produced for each case study and include their own set of conclusions and recommendations for the attention of the respective units and offices.
13. FAO defines a 'best practice' as a successful experience that has been tested and replicated in different contexts. A practice often evolves through stages, and the most successful ones often become institutionalized in the form of norms, policies and standards (Figure 1). The SDG 2 evaluation used the term "good practice" in a broad sense; therefore, in addition to "best practices" and "policy/norm", "innovative" and "promising" practices with potential to promote transformative changes in support of SDG 2 were equally considered.

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<sup>4</sup> For further information on the methodology used, please refer to the concept note for the conduct of country case studies (Annex 8) and the concept note for the conduct of signature product reviews (Annex 9).

**Figure 1: Successive stages of a practice (degree of maturity)**



Source: <http://www.fao.org/capacity-development/resources/practical-tools/good-practice-tool/en>

14. The evaluation assessed good practices against the key principles of the 2030 Agenda, i.e. act at scale, interconnectedness and holistic approaches, and social and economic inclusion to “leave no one behind” (LNOB). To reduce the subjectivity of both the selection and the analysis of the practices, a scoring system with clear qualifiers was developed to rate both their degree of maturity and compliance with the principles (Annex 8).
15. The review of good practices also included an analysis of i) their historical evolution within FAO; ii) stakeholders involved in their implementation; iii) factors contributing to success and/or hindering progress; iv) their capacities to address crises, shocks and stresses; and v) FAO’s comparative advantages in their promotion.
16. The country case studies also included questions on FAO’s comparative strengths and weaknesses regarding SDG 2, relevant partnerships (including in the context of the United Nations Reform), and overall challenges and opportunities to advance FAO’s contributions to SDG 2. They also included a specific question on the implications of COVID-19 for FAO’s work in the country.
17. Both types of case studies relied on the following methods: i) extensive and structured documentary review (Annex 3); and ii) in-depth interviews with key informants at global, regional and country levels, both within and outside FAO (Annex 2). Some country case studies also benefited from online surveys with national stakeholders.<sup>5</sup>
18. As a way of testing the findings on a broader set of country programmes, but also to overcome the possible bias caused by the selection of “good practices”, the evaluation team undertook a systematic review of 58 evaluations conducted by the Office of Evaluation (OED) between January 2014 and July 2020 (Annex 10).
19. The questions and scoring system used in the case studies were applied to ensure a coherent analysis.
20. The reports produced to document the 14 signature product Reviews and the 15 country cases studies will be presented as annexes to the evaluation report.

#### **1.4. Management arrangements and the evaluation team**

21. The Office of Evaluation (OED) led the evaluation. The second phase involved a combination of five international consultants with high-level expertise in domains relevant to the evaluation and 17 evaluators recruited to conduct the country case studies, taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic.
22. A FAO Reference Group was established to guide this evaluation. The Group was composed of senior management at Rome headquarters (Office of the Director-General, Offices of the

<sup>5</sup> Data collected during phase one was also considered. Please refer to the study on FAO’s role in the design of the SDGs (Annex 5), results of staff survey (Annex 4) and portfolio analysis (Annex 6).

respective Deputy Director-Generals: Ms Maria Helena Semedo, Mr Laurent Thomas and Ms Beth Bechdol, and representatives from the Office of Strategy, Planning and Resources Management (OSP) and the five Regional Offices). The Reference Group was consulted throughout the evaluation process and provided comments on the two draft evaluation reports.

23. The evaluation adopted a participatory approach. Divisions, Technical Units and Country Offices related to the selected signature products and country case studies were involved in their conduct through focal points nominated by Directors and FAO Representatives.

## 1.5. Limitations

24. In addition to the challenges caused by the wide scope of this evaluation, which were pointed out in the first evaluation report, the second phase of the SDG 2 evaluation was highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, the core evaluation team would have conducted the country case studies between March and May 2020, including short visits to the regional offices, and undertaken the study of signature products between June and August 2020. This plan was revised to address the challenges posed by the global emergency, and without compromising the results of an evaluation that covers an estimated 90 percent of what FAO does worldwide.
25. Conducting this already complex evaluation under such adverse conditions was both time consuming and labour intensive. Both exercises were conducted in parallel, i.e. the core evaluation team reviewed the signature products while consultants based in the sampled countries were recruited to conduct the country case studies.
26. The Office of Evaluation (OED) team developed a rigorous system to manage such a large team dispersed all over the world and to provide quality assurance: meetings with the consultants were held on a regular basis, concept notes for the conduct of case studies were developed, as well as a scoring system with clear qualifiers to reduce the subjectivity in the analysis of good practices. Despite this, the following challenges could not be fully addressed:

### *a. Systematic delays*

- i. Many key informants were overwhelmed with meetings during the proposed timeline, thus were unavailable to speak with the evaluation team. Since this is a strategic evaluation, it is natural that key informants are directly involved in activities aimed at addressing the effects of the pandemic either globally or locally. As such, the evaluation had to adopt a flexible timeline, which delayed the conclusion of the case studies.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, in addition to having an inadequate amount of time to conduct a systematic analysis of the case studies, the evaluation team had to rely on draft reports to prepare this evaluation report.
- ii. In the analysis of the final evaluation report, 13 final and 2 draft reports of the country case studies were used. None of the signature products were fully concluded within the deadline, hence only findings that could be duly validated were used. Nonetheless, these delays are also the result of a widely participatory process. Even though some results were not generated on time to be included in this report, this long-term consultative process is generating discussions, learning

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<sup>6</sup> In compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines.

and improvement within FAO; therefore, complying with the main purpose of this evaluation.

*b. Quality, consistency and availability of data*

- i. Although there was a structure in place to ensure the quality of the data collected, it was still not feasible to ensure full consistency among 29 reports produced by different people.
- ii. Unfortunately, FAO personnel based in regional and subregional offices were not consulted in a structured manner as was originally planned, i.e. specific interviews during a visit to the regional offices. Nevertheless, their views were duly considered in this report, as many were consulted through the case studies and during the first phase of the SDG 2 evaluation.

*c. Reprioritization of resources*

- i. The United Nations system-wide research on support to SDG 2 that was proposed in the terms of reference could not be undertaken. In addition to the delays in the negotiation process, some agencies had to allocate both the financial and human resources committed to this activity to other activities related to post-COVID-19 recovery.

## 2. Overview of Phase 2 results

### 2.1. Signature products

**Finding 1. Innovations in FAO have spread quite slowly from their region of origin into other regions. Numerous examples were found where different regions were using markedly different approaches.**

**Finding 2. There is a trend perceptible in both older and newer 'products' towards more holistic approaches, a broadening of scope and a diversification of products, indicating that the current SDG thinking on the importance of sustainability, social inclusion and inter-connectedness is being translated into action, but this evolution is slow in many cases, and old habits tend to endure even under new narratives.**

27. To explore the implementation of FAO's programmes, the evaluation conducted a series of case studies of FAO methodologies, approaches, mechanisms and services with potential to accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG 2 ("signature products"). These products and services were purposefully sampled based on a review of FAO's normative work and project portfolio under SDG 2, conducted during Phase 1. The core evaluation team, with valuable assistance from the respective divisions and departments, reviewed the signature products. An overview of the results is presented in Appendix 3. The reports of each signature product review will be posted on the Office of Evaluation (OED) website as an annex to this report.
28. The assessments focused on how selected products and services evolved over time and expanded from one continent to another. Numerous examples were found where different regions were using markedly different approaches, even on something as apparently universal as locust control. Innovations in FAO programmes have historically spread quite slowly from their region of origin into other regions. For instance, a methodology such as DIMITRA was never tried outside of francophone Africa. Even the farmer field school (FFS) methodology and its derivatives, perhaps FAO's most widely used 'signature product' is mostly used in Africa and Asia and the Pacific.
29. In terms of substantive evolution over time, within FAO's current work there is an obvious trend towards more holistic approaches, a broadening of scope and a diversification of products. The relatively newer products – e.g. agroecology, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), and Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (RWEE) – naturally reflect the current SDG thinking on the importance of sustainability, social inclusion and inter-connectedness. But the evolution is also perceptible in older areas of work. For instance, in the Food for the Cities agenda, FAO has evolved from small urban and peri-urban agriculture projects in the past to a more holistic approach based on food systems, urban-rural linkages and local/territorial governance. The focus of nutrition education has changed from a simple transmission of information to the empowerment of consumers as actors of change in their food environment (although the new approach is still not well incorporated). Likewise, work on commodities has evolved from supporting food reserves in the 1960s and 1970s to fair trade, value chains, and the role of producer organizations and private sector, etc. In the management of transboundary plant diseases and pests, FAO initially had a very narrow focus on one single species (Desert Locust) but has progressively broadened the focus to a larger number of species it helps monitor and

combat,<sup>7</sup> while developing tools for the monitoring of pesticide impact on non-target fauna and on the health of staff (QUEST teams).

30. This evolution is slow in many cases, and old habits tend to endure, even under new names and methodologies. The review of the farmer field schools showed that many of them are still following the old paradigm of simply importing a fixed curriculum from one village to the next – and some of that can be good, when the curriculum has been well tested in the local context – rather than based on true participatory experimentation and learning.

## 2.2. Country case studies

**Finding 3. SDG 2 is prominent in FAO's programmes. An estimated 91 percent of the FAO project portfolio addresses SDG 2 and links between SDG 2 and other SDGs. Approximately two-thirds of the project portfolio focuses on the food production part of SDG 2 (Targets 2.3 on raising smallholders income, 2.4 on sustainable agriculture and 2.5 on biodiversity for food and agriculture), while about one-third aims to impact food consumption directly (Targets 2.1 on hunger and 2.2 on nutrition).**

**Finding 4. While projects specifically dedicated to Target 2.5 on biodiversity for food and agriculture are quite rare, a quarter of the reviewed practices in country included a small component on biodiversity for food and agriculture.**

**Finding 5. Many projects are of a small size, and have not yet matured into visible good practices replicated by other actors and in other locales. Their work is often focused on production and does not extend much beyond the farm gate.**

**Finding 6. The farmer field schools approach is ubiquitous in FAO national programmes. The FFS and its derivatives (including Farmer Business Schools, *Caisses de Résilience*, etc.) frequently feature among FAO good practices on the ground and have been widely adopted by other development actors, including formal extension services.**

**Finding 7. In some of the reviewed interventions, FAO has been providing support for a long time, sometimes decades. Development takes time.**

31. The evaluation also reviewed a diverse array of good practices at country level, all evidently relevant to SDG 2 although some of them had started in prior decades. Seventeen country case studies were purposefully sampled with a focus on good practices, thorough documentary reviews, in-depth interviews with FAO personnel, an exhaustive analysis of the FAO portfolio, and in some cases consultation with FAO regional offices. The wealth of evidence collected is analysed here and in subsequent chapters. Appendix 3 presents 15 of these case studies.<sup>8</sup>
32. Many projects are still of a small size, with good but immature practices having yet to be replicated. Their work is mainly focused on production, and does not extend much beyond the farm gate.
33. Another striking feature is the diversity of approaches described in the different case studies. Development is always local, about local problems but also local agendas and hopes, pursued with local capacities and assets. However, some patterns emerge.

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<sup>7</sup> Cassava mosaic diseases in Africa, fall armyworm worldwide, Red Palm Weevil in the Near East and North Africa, other locust species in Caucasus and Central Asia, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Originally, the evaluation would conduct 18 country case studies. The studies in Malawi and Pakistan were not finalized on time. Indonesia was excluded from the list given the recent country programme evaluation conducted by the Office of Evaluation (OED).

34. The farmer field schools have been widely adopted and feature prominently among FAO good practices on the ground. Among the 38 “good practices” studied, 13 (one-third) were using the FFS methodology or one of its derivatives (Farmer Business Schools in the Philippines, Nutrition Sensitive FFS in Nepal, *Caisses de Résilience* in Burkina Faso, etc.), in 9 of the 15 country case studies (two-thirds of the country case studies).<sup>9</sup> The FFS approach is ubiquitous in FAO national programmes. This evaluation also included a ‘signature product review’ on farmer field schools (see section 2.1).
35. Another consistent pattern is that in some of the reviewed interventions, FAO has been providing support for a long time, sometimes decades. The Philippine National Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programme, aiming to make IPM the standard approach to pest management in the country, started in 1993. In Morocco, a project in which FAO helped the national water and electricity utility (*Office national de l’eau et l’électricité*, ONEE) generalize access to drinking water in the rural areas, has been implemented from 1997 to present.<sup>10</sup> This pattern is partly a reflection of our methodological framework, which encouraged selecting practices that had achieved some probing results and hence that had been implemented for some time, but it also reflects the truism that development takes time.
36. Although the sample size is too small to analyse at the regional level, the FFS methodology appears more systematically used in Africa and Asia and the Pacific than elsewhere. Comprehensive legal and policy support involving the development of governance instruments in the area of food and nutrition security (FNS) (e.g. national councils and secretariats for FNS, laws on school feeding, right to food laws, etc.) is a modality more frequently used in Latin America than elsewhere (Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, but also Cabo Verde in the case study sample).
37. In terms of addressing the various SDG 2 targets, the sample of good practices reflects the results of the portfolio analysis conducted in Phase 1, which estimated 91 percent of the FAO project portfolio addresses SDG 2 and links between SDG 2 and other SDGs. This data is by no means perfect and the numbers only provide orders of magnitude and not a precise tally.
38. Approximately two-thirds of SDG 2-relevant projects assessed in the country case studies address the food production part of SDG 2 (Targets 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5), while about one-third aims directly at food consumption (Targets 2.1, 2.2), without going through food production (e.g. school feeding policies). This is reflective of an organization more focused on agriculture than on food.
39. Targets 2.1 (food security) and 2.2 (nutrition) are intimately intertwined and almost impossible to disentangle at project level. Likewise, targets 2.3 and 2.4 (profitable and sustainable agriculture, respectively) could often not be disentangled, even on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the practice. The sample is not representative, but indicates that slightly more attention is paid to 2.2 than 2.1, as well as to 2.3 than 2.4 in the FAO current portfolio.
40. Phase 1 report concluded that Target 2.5 on biodiversity for food and agriculture received less than 1 percent of programme outlays over the evaluated period. Phase 2 helps nuance

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<sup>9</sup> Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Fiji, Georgia, Nepal, Philippines and Rwanda.

<sup>10</sup> The share of rural communities with access to quality drinking water and sanitation reached 97 percent in 2018. The project saved time searching for water, improved health and hygiene, and helped feed livestock and grow vegetables in many remote communities.

this point: indeed, projects that are mainly focused on 2.5 are quite rare,<sup>11</sup> yet 24 percent of the reviewed practices included a small component on biodiversity for food and agriculture (Table 3:). Therefore Target 2.5 on biodiversity for food and agriculture was 'mainstreamed' (to one degree or another) in a quarter of the reviewed cases, even though it may have received limited dedicated funding.

**Table 3: SDG Targets aimed by the good practices reviewed in phase 2 country case studies**

<b>SDG target aimed at (more than one per practice)</b>	<b>Number of good practices reviewed</b>	<b>Percentage of all practices reviewed (38)</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
2.1: End hunger and ensure access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food	10	26%	Often together
2.2: End all forms of malnutrition	12	32%	
2.3: Double the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers	24	63%	Often together
2.4: Ensure sustainable food production and resilient agricultural practices	20	53%	
2.5: Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals	9	24%	
2.a: Increase investment in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services	12	32%	
Other SDGs (core operational links only)	8	21%	

<sup>11</sup> An in-depth search of the FAO portfolio for biodiversity projects conducted during Phase 2 yielded only 0.64 percent of project focused mainly on 2.5, even lower than estimated in Phase 1. The share appears to be rising (1.6 percent in 2018), mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean (46 percent of all projects mainly focused on 2.5) and through global projects (29 percent of all projects mainly focused on 2.5), thanks to a few GEF projects dedicated to biodiversity protection and use.

## **3 Progress in addressing key principles of the 2030 Agenda**

### **3.1. Interconnections, synergies, trade-offs and sustainability**

**Finding 8. FAO contributed significantly to the design of SDG 2, rooted in the Food Systems approach, and more generally to the comprehensive and interconnected 2030 Agenda. This is a significant achievement and an asset going forward.**

**Finding 9. Translating this rich and complex agenda into practice will be a challenge, as there may be a tendency to embrace too much complexity with the danger of dissipating capacity and funding across too wide a spectrum. The complexity of holistic approaches represents a real constraint to their adoption in the field.**

**Finding 10. Some of the reviewed areas of work have already integrated the need to ‘boil down’ complex thinking into simple, actionable messages, such as agroecology and its 10 Elements.**

**Finding 11. The progress achieved in the transition towards more sustainable agriculture is limited to a small number of countries so far.**

**Finding 12. Territorial approaches focusing on a specific region can help reduce complexity. Each locale has its specificities and priorities, which represent opportunities to focus complex global holistic approaches onto some specific solutions on the ground.**

**Finding 13. There is always a need to focus on what one can do well, taking into account other actors and what they are doing already. One has to start somewhere, using a focused entry point that resonates well with existing needs, and helping key stakeholders explore the complex ramifications of this single entry point in a number of SDGs (or dimensions) within the local context. This is a good way to address key linkages and trade-offs while avoiding “analysis paralysis”.**

41. The report from Phase 1 highlighted the contribution of FAO to the design of SDG 2, and more generally to the comprehensive and interconnected 2030 Agenda. It also found that FAO has a wide library of holistic approaches, and is constantly developing new ones, such as the Food Systems approach.
42. The Phase 1 report also expressed a cautionary note about the inherent complexity of systemic approaches, including the 2030 Agenda, and the potential difficulties in translating them into focused action at country level. Embracing too much complexity during implementation runs the danger of dissipating capacity and funding across too wide a spectrum of topics and partners. The Phase 1 report concluded that territorial approaches were promising in addressing this ‘complexity challenge’ of the SDGs, because they tend to allow for local simplifications of the framework, less numerous partners, etc.
43. Results from Phase 2 confirm this general picture and indicate that FAO has already integrated the need to ‘boil down’ complex thinking into simple, actionable messages, at least in some of the reviewed areas of work such as agroecology and its 10 Elements (FAO, 2018a). The issuance of this document was described as a turning point for agroecology, a set of holistic practices that had produced interesting experiences by civil society and farmer organizations since the 1980s but has so far often failed to convince decision makers in ministries of agriculture. Agroecology is certainly more of a social movement than a governmental-led one at the moment, and is sometimes perceived as ideological or militant, due to its historical roots as an alternative to the Green Revolution. In such a

context, FAO's role is to help anchor agroecology in science rather than ideology. The 10 Elements helped to make progress in this regard, as well as in defining clear entry points. The Scaling up Agroecology Initiative was later launched and made good use of the 10 Elements in its communication material (FAO, 2018b).

44. Progress has been achieved in a small number of countries in this transition towards more sustainable agriculture, for instance in Senegal, Nicaragua, and in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, where a bold agroecological experiment is underway in the form of the Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) programme promoting chemical-free agricultural practices. More than 700 000 farmers are currently involved in the programme, with plans to scale up to six million farmers by 2025. FAO has been approached to provide complementary technical support.
45. The work of FAO in support of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) and of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is conceptually closely related to agroecology but was found to be somewhat detached from it operationally. This represents a missed opportunity to work jointly on *in situ* (in farmers' field) conservation. The agenda and work of the Treaty and Commission were reported as dominated by more developed nations and perhaps too focused on technological solutions and *ex situ* conservation (e.g. gene banks) to be of interest to many developing nations.
46. *In situ* (in farmers' field) GRFA conservation projects are quite rare in FAO's country programmes but they are significant in that they make the connection between the use of biodiversity in practice, and its valorization for food and agriculture. FAO has piloted *in situ* conservation of genetic resources in the past and still does. In the sample of country case studies, the SIPAM project in Morocco implemented from 2010 onward in Imilchil, Aït Mansour, Figuig, Assa and Akka helped small-scale family farmers conserve biodiversity through gene banks as well as through biological agriculture certification to improve their incomes. It seems to be paying-off at least for some farmers, although obtaining the biological registration by the *Office de Sécurité Sanitaire des Produits Alimentaires* remains a bottleneck for many. Another series of examples is described in the recent evaluation of the Benefit Sharing Fund, created under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
47. Another evaluation will assess FAO's contribution to SDG 13 on Climate Action. Therefore, the present report does not delve into mitigation and adaptations to climate change. However, its increasing urgency suggests a need for greater inclusion in planning and implementation of SDG 2 targets. This includes the related agenda of the "Blue Economy", a term that originates from the RIO+20 conference.
48. The Food Systems approach, in which SDG 2 thinking is rooted as shown in Phase 1 of this evaluation, is still being developed. It clearly lends itself to the tension, highlighted in the Phase 1 report, between a complex theory and its practice on the ground. For instance, the City Region Food Systems Programme (CRFS), which attempts to visualize and map the food systems of large cities from the perspective of their relations with their hinterland as a way to optimize urban-rural linkages, was found to be quite complex and its

implementation somewhat top-down.<sup>12</sup> Although there are some positive results in terms of developing multisector plans and creating multi-actor platforms, overall progress on the ground has been slow.<sup>13</sup>

49. In the same area of work, FAO has been implementing other initiatives whose *modus operandi* were simpler and more heuristic. For example, the NADHALI project, which raised additional funds for Dhaka and Nairobi (from the Dutch and Italian governments, respectively) to put in operation the actions recommended in the food system strategy the project helped design. A smaller project in 2017 allowed Dakar (Senegal) to share its approach to micro gardens with Douala (Cameroon) and Praia (Cabo Verde); an excellent practice which, despite the visible impact in Praia, has not been further replicated.
50. The main challenges to fully implement the food systems approach stem from the difficulties in assembling holistic governance structures, and in coordinating complex relationships, e.g. between central and local governments.<sup>14</sup> Each locale has its specificities and priorities that need to be seen as opportunities to focus some complex global holistic thinking onto a specific, focused and therefore *simpler* solution on the ground.<sup>15</sup>
51. In the area of legal and parliamentary assistance, it was found that so-called “framework laws” that encompass a wide array of domains and issues are less directly applicable than laws focused on one single issue, such as the school feeding laws approved in some Latin American countries and the food label law in Chile. In this later case, the entry point was quite focused and yet, consultations with a wide range of actors took place to take into consideration the multiple implications and trade-offs (nutrition, trade, fiscal, etc.).
52. This offers a lesson for complex theories of action: find a single focused entry point that resonates well with existing needs, dynamics and political economy, and help national (or local) stakeholders explore in their own experience the complex ramifications of this single entry point in a number of SDGs (or dimensions) including food security and nutrition. This process ought to yield a programme of work that is “complex-enough” (paying due attention to important synergies and trade-offs) yet still manageable and meaningful to local actors.

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<sup>12</sup> CRFS is an emerging practice to understand the food systems from micro perspective, which encompass the complex network of actors, processes and relationships involved in food production, processing, marketing and consumption in a given geographical region. “The CRFS aims to foster the development of resilient and sustainable food systems within urban centres, peri-urban and rural areas surrounding cities”, making more efficient the connections that already exist among actors and spaces across the food/value chains and markets. From 2015 onward, FAO and RUAF Foundation piloted the CRFS approach in the city-regions of Colombo (Sri Lanka), Lusaka and Kitwe (Zambia), Medellín (Colombia), Quito (Ecuador), Toronto (Canada) and Utrecht (the Netherlands), Kigali (Rwanda), Antananarivo (Madagascar) and Tamale (Ghana). <http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/approach-old/crfs/en/>

<sup>13</sup> For example, in Colombo where the City Council formulated a specific norm for food waste management after it had been identified as one of the main problems.

<sup>14</sup> For example, national structures and rules on intergovernmental transfers often do not enable territorial approaches.

<sup>15</sup> For instance in the case of the CRFS, Lima and its suburb use a format called the *mancomunidad* (a concept used in several Latin American countries) to regroup administrative districts in the same metropolitan (or rural/urban) area, and this level could perhaps be used as a useful entry point to implement programmes that benefit several administrative units.

## 3.2. Leaving no one behind

**Finding 14.** The “leave no one behind” (LNOB) principle, central to the 2030 Agenda, is yet to become properly delineated and communicated within the Organization. As a result, FAO has not systematically mainstreamed this principle into its work. Interesting initiatives in terms of social inclusion tend to remain “islands of success” promoted locally by discrete individuals, with so-far limited replication across the FAO technical units and decentralized offices.

**Finding 15.** The most prominent examples are to be found in FAO's work directly aiming at SDG 2 Targets 2.1 and 2.2, such as legal and parliamentary work on FNS (e.g. school feeding laws, constitutional amendments recognizing the right to food) and nutrition education. Policies, constitutional amendments and laws supported by FAO tend to make explicit mention of vulnerable groups. Activities in support of food production (Targets 2.3 and 2.4) were often found less socially inclusive, as they require access to resources such as land.

**Finding 16.** Even programmes geared towards delivering public goods (for instance the management of transboundary pests and diseases) have an equity dimension. The principle of “leave no one behind” still applies to them, e.g. in terms of inequality between poor and rich nations. FAO has a strong comparative advantage in these domains, where its role is to favour a positive outcome through a fair, collaborative and technically competent forum of exchange and coordination between Members.

**Finding 17.** The establishment of the Office of SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs (OSL) reinforces FAO's commitment to combat inequalities amongst countries, to leave no nation behind.

53. The commitment to “leave no one behind” is a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda, as the SDGs can only be considered as achieved if met for every country, people and group in need (UN, 2014).<sup>16</sup> The UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination adopted a shared framework aimed at including the principle of LNOB at the core of the UN System's efforts to support the achievement of the SDGs (UNCEB, 2017). In summary, UN entities should: i) institutionalize their commitment to LNOB through their strategic frameworks;<sup>17</sup> ii) adopt monitoring and analysis tools that systematically integrate inequalities and equity issues; iii) build accountability for results on LNOB; and iv) provide a comprehensive and coherent package of support to combat inequalities.
54. FAO has historically paid particular attention to reducing inequalities amongst countries and to improving livelihoods of rural populations, often the poorest in a given country.<sup>18,19</sup> Regarding other vulnerable groups, FAO has made some efforts to promote social and economic equality across its strategies and programmes, in particular in relation to women,

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. rural populations, women, the poor and extreme poor, children, adolescents, youth, elderly, unemployed, slum dwellers, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees and displaced persons.

<sup>17</sup> The UN Committee for Development Policy also recommends UN entities to embed the concept of LNOB in their strategic frameworks, and to translate that concept into action (ECOSOC, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Reducing inequalities and discriminations involving rural populations stems from its mandate. Bettering the condition of rural populations is one of FAO's purposes as stated in the preamble of its Constitution.

<sup>19</sup> Although FAO is a membership organization, its interventions prioritize countries most in need; e.g. by selecting focus countries for the implementation of the regional initiatives, by prioritizing LDCs, landlocked and middle-income countries, etc.

youth and crisis-affected people.<sup>20</sup> Despite these efforts, Phase 1 of the SDG 2 evaluation found that LNOB has not been fully integrated into FAO's Strategic Framework, and neither has it been systematically mainstreamed into its programmes and projects, nor properly delineated and communicated within the Organization. Some of its personnel perceive their work as purely technical, and there is still a lack of understanding on what this principle entails for technical teams and decentralized offices. Moreover, FAO's monitoring and reporting systems include very few questions and/or indicators on equity and equality issues.<sup>21</sup> As a result, there is limited accountability from senior managers and staff on its implementation, which in turn limits the availability of resources and capacities to systematically mainstream social issues into FAO's technical work.

55. This reflects on FAO's support to its Members. Although there are some remarkable examples of socially and economically inclusive interventions, they are often standalone practices designed to support particular groups, e.g. RWEE, VGGT and *Caisse de Résilience*. Furthermore, even though these and other practices such as DIMITRA Clubs offer relevant methodologies to promote social inclusion (including with men, who have started to join DIMITRA clubs), they tend to remain "islands of success" promoted locally by discrete individual initiatives, with so-far limited replication across the FAO technical units and decentralized offices.
56. In terms of mainstreaming gender and other equity considerations in the FAO field programme, the evaluation found that the most prominent examples of social and/or economical inclusiveness are to be found in FAO's work directly aiming at SDG 2 Targets 2.1 and 2.2, such as legal and parliamentary work on FNS (e.g. on school feeding programmes) FAO's legal and policy support to FNS-related issues typically involved several sectors such as agriculture, education, social development and health, as well as a variety of partners such as WFP, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), parliamentarians, local governments, farmers' cooperatives, consumers organizations and the private sector. These policies, constitutional amendments and laws supported by FAO often make explicit mention to vulnerable groups, e.g. in Cabo Verde, Colombia and Ecuador.<sup>22</sup>
57. Nutrition education activities were found socially inclusive to some extent. At the community level, nutrition education often incorporates cultural habits and traditional/indigenous knowledge. Nevertheless, the great potential of nutrition education to promote gender transformation around food and nutrition is still to be explored.<sup>23</sup>
58. Activities and programmes in support of food production (Targets 2.3 and 2.4) were often found to be less socially inclusive. Many FAO products in support of food production are not designed to address the most vulnerable groups, e.g. the poor and extreme poor, as they require access to services or resources such as land, e.g. the FFS, support to value

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<sup>20</sup> The Reviewed Strategic Framework (2013) incorporated gender as a cross-cutting issue, explicitly addressed youth employment (SO3), and included a specific objective to increase resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises (SO5). Furthermore, it developed policies on gender and on indigenous and tribal peoples, as well as frameworks on child labour, youth and social protection to help incorporate these groups into FAO's work.

<sup>21</sup> FAO's Strategic Framework has few output indicators on gender, youth and child labour (SO3). Country Annual Reports include questions on gender and indigenous peoples, but countries report more on activities developed than on LNOB.

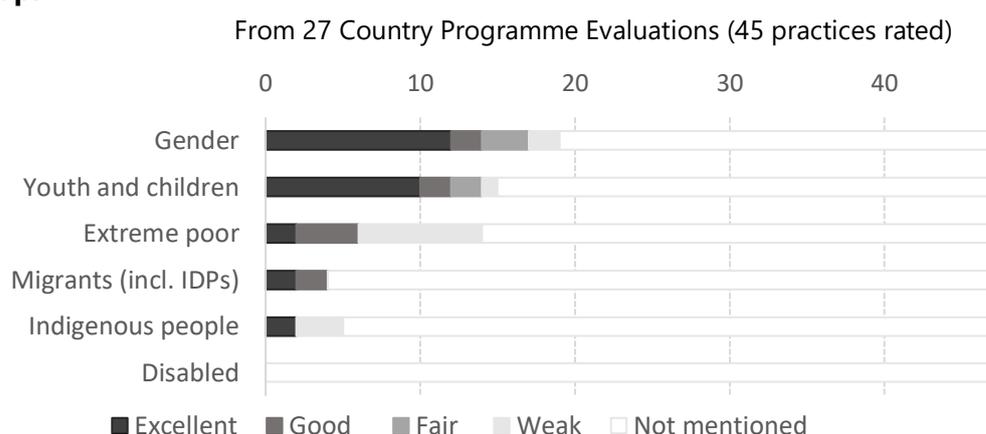
<sup>22</sup> In Cabo Verde, for example, the law 37/IX/2018 states that every person is entitled to his/her Right to Food regardless of nationality, sex, gender, ethnic origin, race, religion, ideology or intellectual convictions, socio-economic conditions, age and sexual orientation (Art. 8).

<sup>23</sup> For example, education materials rarely incorporate gender considerations such as food distribution within the households.

chain or to aquaculture. Nevertheless, initiatives on aquaculture and blue growth present some successful practices in mainstreaming disadvantaged groups into technical activities, e.g. Fiji, Laos, Turkey and the Small Scale Fisheries (SSF) Guidelines.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, some initiatives involving support to value chains involve vulnerable groups, especially women and youth, e.g. in Costa Rica, Nepal, Philippines, Rwanda and Sudan. Initiatives involving agroecology and conservation of genetic resources are also inclusive by nature, in particular of women, youth, indigenous and tribal peoples; however, FAO's work in both fields has had a limited country footprint so far. The Zero Budget Natural Farming programme in Andhra Pradesh involves women, landless farmers and laborers.

59. Women are often more involved in FAO's interventions than other vulnerable groups. In fact, FAO's experience with gender shows that it is possible to make significant advances towards leaving no one behind in a relatively short time, but it demands a comprehensive transformation in terms of governance, structure and business models, such as that triggered by the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the fact that gender is a cross-cutting issue within FAO's Strategic Framework.
60. The number of interventions addressing **women** as producers and entrepreneurs has grown over the years. Methodologies such as the DIMITRA Clubs or the value chain work and the RWEE projects were developed and implemented. Modules on gender and nutrition were included in capacity development activities, including in FFS (e.g. Burkina Faso, Nepal and Sudan) with traditional knowledge included in the FFS curriculum in Angola. A large number of women's cooperatives were strengthened (e.g. Colombia, Rwanda and the Philippines). However, few of the reviewed projects promoted access to labour-saving technologies (e.g. for energy in Bangladesh, and for water in Morocco).
61. Other groups tend to be left further behind. Youth and children are addressed by school meal programmes, Junior Life and Field Schools, and a few value chains projects. Disabled persons and indigenous people are hardly mentioned if at all. The same pattern holds true when analysing a sample of 27 country programme evaluations (CPEs) conducted over the past six years (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Inclusion of the 'Leave No One Behind' principle in reviewed practices for specific groups**



Source: Evaluation team

62. During the 2020 Regional Conferences, FAO and Members are renewing their commitment to LNOB amongst and within countries. The reports prepared for these conferences

<sup>24</sup> Such as the extreme poor, women, indigenous peoples and youth.

focused on women and to some extent youth. Indigenous peoples have only been mentioned in the report for the Latin America and the Caribbean. Other vulnerable groups such as migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities and the urban poor were barely included.

63. For the **youth**, one of the most pressing challenges ahead is to identify ways of attracting this particular group to agriculture-related activities.<sup>25</sup> The focus is on activities involving innovation and income generation such as agribusiness (e.g. Angola, Costa Rica and Rwanda), either upstream or downstream of food production. Another idea is to capitalize on the youth's desire for environmental sustainability (e.g. agroecology in Senegal), for fairer markets and trade, for modernization and radical change. The SDGs are about their future after all, and some of them care for environmental and social sustainability, often with a sense of urgency that appears new to their elders. The recently created Youth Committee in FAO draws from this idea that the youth offers dynamism and energy, and a sense of urgency.
64. Among the interesting cases of social inclusion recorded in country programme evaluations figured the development of a new agro-processing curriculum for the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), including food processing technologies, the development of new market products, standard dietary guidelines and packaging regulations. GSA has since delivered the curriculum to about 20 students per year, and has approached FAO to help develop hands-on practical modules (e.g. lab work, processing plants, labelling) as well as other courses, e.g. on fisheries.
65. Many **children** have benefited from school feeding programmes, nutrition education practices, and other interventions aimed at improving household livelihoods. Nevertheless, FAO's technical work barely integrates considerations to child labour in agriculture. Beyond school meals, FAO has worked with educational institutions to integrate concerns such as nutrition in the curricula of universities and vocational schools (Burkina Faso). Vocational schools in agriculture and related fields have formed a neglected sector in some countries, and it would be important to modernize them if the sector is to attract the youth. FAO could help modernize formal training for agricultural extensionists, among others.
66. Regarding **indigenous peoples**, FAO recognizes that they are often among the poorest of the poor. However, support to this group is still very limited with few successful examples, mainly in Latin America and Southern Asia.<sup>26</sup> Even though there is a team to help mainstreaming indigenous-related issues into FAO's work, it lacks resources (both human and financial) and visibility within the Organization.
67. The SDGs principle of "leave no one behind" also requires a greater focus on the **extreme poor, crisis-affected communities, migrants, refugees and internally displaced people** as they experience the most acute deprivations (FAO *et al.*, 2020). Attention to these groups has been growing over the past years. In 2017, for example, the FAO Social Protection Framework was published. In 2019, a corporate framework was developed to promote progress on extreme poverty reduction (FAO, 2019a). Nevertheless, the social inclusion of the extreme poor in FAO programmes and projects at country level is still uneven, partly because, as mentioned above, many FAO products and approaches in support of food and agriculture production are not designed to address the most vulnerable groups.

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<sup>25</sup> As indicated in the priorities for FAO activities in the regions emanating from, e.g., the 2020 FAO Regional Conferences.

<sup>26</sup> Reviewed Strategic Framework and Outline of the Medium Term Plan 2018-21, page 63. There is also a policy on indigenous and tribal peoples.

68. With respect to people affected by forced migration, FAO's emergency portfolio has been increasing sharply since 2017.<sup>27</sup> Some good practices are reported in certain programmes, e.g. the vocational and language training programmes for Syrian refugees in Turkey, or dedicated support to refugees and host populations in a number of contexts (e.g. in Bangladesh Cox Bazar or in Uganda West Nile Region). However, there is no comprehensive narrative to guide FAO's support to refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities.
69. **The urban poor and persons with disabilities** are rarely mentioned in FAO's programmes and projects, nor in high-level commitments.<sup>28</sup> The urban poor are only partly included in urban food systems initiatives and social protection interventions. Regarding the latter group, the only example found by this evaluation refers to inclusion of children with disabilities in some school feeding programmes.
70. Instruments such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (CFS, 2012) and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF) (COFI, 2015) can play an important role. The shift of FAO's focus on the private sector, public-private partnerships and innovation may negatively affect both fishers and indigenous communities, if their tenure rights are not protected. The evaluation found some progress in the implementation of both the VGGT and SSF guidelines, with more achievements observed in the implementation of the VGGT, notably in the Balkans, Mongolia, Sierra Leone and Uganda.
71. This is understandable since the VGGTs preceded the SSF guidelines. Implementation of both guidelines takes time due to the nature of the multi-stakeholder processes involved and the fact that policy processes take time to materialize. However, their implementation seems to be compartmentalized and is not taken up by FAO as a whole. The FFS guidelines are also more sectorial than the VGGTs, and more concerned with promoting a sector that is often "invisible" and neglected in national economies than with formalizing tenure rights.
72. There is evidently some donor pressure to consider gender equality and other equity issues, for instance in Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) projects. Some of the FFS, VGGT and Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI) principles were integrated into the project formulation cycle as environmental and social safeguards, with a view to integrating them into project documents in a cross-cutting manner.
73. Even the FAO programme geared towards delivering public good (for instance the management of transboundary pests and diseases) have an equity dimension. The principle of Leave No One Behind still applies to them, e.g. in terms of inequality between poor and rich nations. FAO has a strong comparative advantage in these domains, where its role is to favour a positive outcome through a fair, collaborative and technically competent forum of exchange between Members. In this respect, the establishment of the Office of SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs (OSL) reinforces FAO's commitment to combat inequalities amongst countries.
74. For instance, in the case of the management of transboundary pests and diseases, the impact of locust plagues appears in itself near universal. The same applies to the support

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<sup>27</sup> As of 30 June 2020, the total portfolio value of forced displacement projects was USD 619 million, which represents a 17 percent increase compared to total funding for the 2018/2019 biennium (USD 530 million), and a 32 percent increase compared to total funding for the 2017/2018 biennium (USD 468 million).

<sup>28</sup> Such as FAO Regional Conferences (FAO, 2020; FAO, 2020a; FAO, 2020b; FAO2020c; and FAO, 2020d).

to commodity markets and international trade to a degree. In these types of work, FAO's role stems from the need for all nations to collaborate for a common goal (fair trade) or against a common threat (locust), which needs to be controlled *everywhere* (or as widely as possible) in order to be efficiently controlled *anywhere*. Hence in these cases, the solidarity principle of leave no one behind (i.e. the calls for fairness, mutual support, and equality) also resonates at the level of nations. The world cannot afford to leave poor *countries* behind in the fight against transboundary pests, for instance, because then these countries would become reservoirs, and that would negate the efforts of other countries.

75. In these domains, where it has a strong comparative advantage, the role of FAO is to favour a positive outcome through a fair, collaborative and technically competent forum of exchange between Members, promoting transparent exchange of experience and information, and fighting against the temptation to blame one's neighbours for transboundary pests or for trade barriers.<sup>29</sup> To leave no nation behind.

### 3.3. Acting at scale

**Finding 18. Many FAO projects at country level are of a small size, due to the lack of a programmatic approach in FAO as well as the tendency to fund small, impermanent pilot projects. Nevertheless, a number of global and local initiatives already acting at scale or with a strong potential to do so are highlighted in the report. Some of the remarkable results in line with this principle stem from FAO's ability to influence national laws, policies and budgets.**

**Finding 19. Supporting national initiatives and programmes is potentially more impactful than pilot projects. Other entry points currently being used by FAO to act at scale include legal support, regional programmes and policy processes, support to trade and investment, climate finance, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and education (both formal and informal).**

**Finding 20. Education of food producers, traders and consumers is central to the transition towards more sustainable food systems, and support to national education institutions potentially presents an extremely useful entry point too rarely used by FAO.**

**Finding 21. The depth and breadth of partnerships in country appears to be increasing progressively, at least in some countries, often those with the best programmes.**

**Finding 22. A few promising initiatives notwithstanding, partnerships with the private sector remain insufficient to achieve an impact on food systems.**

76. The principle of Acting at scale implies working with a broad range of stakeholders, including the private sector, to mobilize and share financial resources, knowledge, expertise and technology for development, and to influence national economies and food systems.
77. On this topic, the report from Phase 1 found that closer links with the private sector, producer organizations, research institutes and philanthropic organizations were required if FAO was to act at scale. Nevertheless, a number of global initiatives with a strong potential to act at scale are highlighted below, with a focus on some salient results achieved at the regional and national levels.

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<sup>29</sup> The two issues are linked in food and agriculture, through "non-tariff barriers to trade".

78. A distinction was made between “upscaling” in the form of normative laws, policies and programmes, and “out-scaling” in terms of replication of good practices by food producers, traders and consumers on a voluntary basis.
79. The evaluation rated each of the reviewed “practices” at country level against the criterion of Acting at Scale, through a standard four-point scale from weak to excellent.<sup>30</sup> The same scale and methodology was applied to another sample: 45 practices described in 27 CPEs conducted by the Office of Evaluation (OED) since 2014. The results from these two samples are compared in Table 4.
80. The two samples present a different picture: the sample of country case studies includes far more practices acting at scale than the CPE sample. The reason is simply that the CCS sample (including the choice of countries and the choice of practices in each country) is strongly and purposefully biased towards large, successful practices, as it was precisely meant to illustrate good practices, as explained in section 1. The CPE sample may also be biased towards the positive (because the practices reviewed in this sample were the best described in CPE reports), but less biased than the CCS sample because the countries undergoing a CPE are not selected with a built-in positive bias.
81. The CPE sample is therefore closer to a representative sample of FAO projects, but still tilted towards the “good practice” in country. Slightly less than one in five practices in this CPE sample (18 percent) were rated as ‘excellent’, i.e. truly acting at scale.

**Table 4: Ratings of reviewed practices on the principle of ‘Acting at Scale’**

Rating	CPE practices*		CCS practices†	
	Nb of practices	Percent of total	Nb of practices	Percent of total
Weak	3	7%	3	8%
Fair	18	40%	5	14%
Good	16	36%	16	44%
Excellent	8	18%	12	33%
Total	45	100%	36	100%

\* From 27 Country Programme Evaluations reviewed

† From 14 cases studies where the dimension was rated

82. Therefore, the overall picture presented during Phase 1 remains valid: FAO implements many small pilot projects, some of which are “islands of success” but even these are rarely scaled-up at the national level or beyond. This situation reflects a lack of innovation, as the pilot project is one of the oldest developmental approach. However, a significant proportion of FAO interventions are already acting at scale, as described in this report. These interventions often use national, systemic entry points such as policy processes and political commitments, support to investment in agriculture and to national programmes, regional-driven processes and collaborative initiatives, and vocational education.
83. In terms of “upscaling”, legal support stands out among the interventions reviewed for this report as one of the most productive and effective areas, and deserves to be expanded. Laws are more sustainable than policies, and stand better chances of being applied. A welcomed emphasis on support to policy implementation and evaluation is also noticeable, for instance in the Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and

<sup>30</sup> Each point in the scale was dully described with clear partnership and financial parameters.

Transformation (FIRST) programme. There is a concern that classic, supply-driven policy support focusing on drafting policy documents and hoping for their approval and implementation, often comes short. In this regard, supporting national initiatives and programmes, such as the Zero Budget Natural Farming Programme of Andhra Pradesh in India or the support to institutionalizing the FFS methodology as a rural extension methodology in Angola, is potentially more impactful at real scale than using pilot projects to demonstrate some innovation conceived in Rome, because it builds on local dynamics and policies.

84. FAO's work on the control of transboundary pests and diseases, on commodities markets, and on investment support was also found to be acting at significant scales. The current response to the Desert Locust crisis in East Africa and Yemen illustrates the scale at which FAO can operate in helping its Members manage transboundary pests. Likewise, the work on monitoring commodity markets was leveraged in 2020 to underwrite FAO's analysis of the COVID-19 crisis impact on food security and value chains, which illustrates its potential utility on a wide scale.
85. As for investment, it is obviously key to achieving SDG 2, but there is a significant gap.<sup>31,32</sup> Both official development assistance (ODA) and public expenditure on agriculture as a share of overall public expenditure have lagged. The World Bank estimates that the demand for food will increase by 70 percent by 2050, and that meeting this demand would require at least USD 80 in additional annual investments (World Bank 2019).
86. The Investment Centre has provided robust support to agricultural investment through International Finance Institutions (IFIs) and national budgets. It is unlikely that its principal client, the World Bank, would have been able to scale up its agricultural lending without high quality technical support from FAO. Between 2012 and 2019, the FAO Investment Centre supported the design of 362 World Bank investment projects for a total investment value of USD 47 billion. In 2019 alone, the Investment Centre supported the design of 50 World Bank projects valued at some USD 10 billion. The Centre also supported the preparation of 14 projects funded by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Support Programme (GAFSP) for a total value of USD 438 million.<sup>33,34</sup>
87. In 2018, following an extensive review, the Bank and FAO renewed their commitment to work together to increase investment in agriculture.
88. The FAO Investment Centre provides a quarter of its project design and implementation support<sup>35</sup> capacity to IFAD, which focuses on the poorest farmers, fisherfolks and pastoralists, women and youth in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and their engagement in agricultural value chains. Over the last five years, the Centre supported the design of 48 IFAD-financed investment projects for a total value of USD 4.3 billion. The FAO Investment

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<sup>31</sup> Target 2A aims to "Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries."

<sup>32</sup> According to World Bank estimates, growth in the agriculture sector is two to four times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest compared to other sectors. See World Development Report 2007 (World Bank, 2008)

<sup>33</sup> A grant fund financed by multiple donors and hosted by the Bank.

<sup>34</sup> The GAFSP has been an important driver for the development of national agricultural investment programmes (NAIPS) making incremental funding available based on their existence.

<sup>35</sup> The evolution noted above towards greater implementation support is discernible in the work of the Investment Centre. According to data based on allocation of staff weeks, implementation support now accounts for 60 percent of the Investment Centre's work programme with the World Bank.

Centre supports an estimated 30 to 40 percent of IFAD's operations worldwide, and there is an increasing demand to expand this support; however it cannot be met due to insufficient resources.<sup>36</sup>

89. The Centre's support to International Finance Institutions is intertwined with another line of work in support to Members' own public spending for agriculture. This started with supporting investment frameworks under the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). FAO has long supported this continental effort to raise public investment in agriculture. The Investment Centre played a key role in the design of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) West Africa Food Security Resilience Programme and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Agricultural Investment Plan, as well as numerous National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIP) on the African continent. In 2016, a review by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) demonstrated that the average amount spent on agriculture as a share of total public expenditure has been less than 4 percent per year for Africa as a whole, similar in magnitude to the level seen in 1995–2003. Only five countries exceeded the target of 10 percent of public expenditures in the 2008–2014 period. Statistical analysis indicated that the agricultural growth rates were generally larger for countries that were implementing CAADP (Jayne & Ameyaw, 2016).
90. Another example is the support provided to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)'s Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI).<sup>37,38</sup> The FAO Investment Centre, working with decentralized offices and technical divisions, helped IGAD and its Members develop regional and Country Resilience Programming Papers (CPP) that outline the required resilience-enhancing policies and investments. FAO has also been a key member of the IDDRSI Platform Steering Committee, and supported IGAD in carrying out the mid-term review of the first phase of the IDDRSI Strategy (2013-2018) (FAO, 2016). It appears that the CPPs are being translated into actual investment projects, often with the support of different development partners, in form of soft loans or grants; and several countries are beginning to show tangible evidence of success in building resilience and improving the livelihoods of drought-prone communities (IDDRSI). Since the initial investments, donors and national governments have developed a pipeline of resilience-related project investments within the IDDRSI framework valued at over USD 16 billion (IDDRSI 3W resilience mapping: [https://resilience.igad.int/tools\\_info\\_systems/resilience-3w-mapping-3/](https://resilience.igad.int/tools_info_systems/resilience-3w-mapping-3/)).
91. Strikingly, the most significant share of private investment comes from smallholders themselves, investing in their own farms. Smallholder investment in agriculture is estimated to three times as much as all other sources of investment combined (FAO, 2012). This calls for "out-scaling". In this context, protecting secure tenure rights – including through the VGGTs or RAI – appears to be a prerequisite for robust, sustained private investment in agriculture. The World Bank promotes tenure security as part of its "ease of doing business" framework, for good reason.

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<sup>36</sup> The Investment Centre also routinely contributes to the design of some of IFAD's two-year country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs).

<sup>37</sup> Comprising Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

<sup>38</sup> Launched in 2011 in response to a severe drought in the Horn of Africa, IDDRSI aimed to end drought emergencies and achieve drought disaster resilient communities, institutions and ecosystems in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of the region by 2027. The Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) is a somewhat similar programme in the Sahel and West Africa.

92. FAO has slowly been gaining experience with agribusiness, which will require much greater investments if SDG 2 is to be achieved. The public sector is critical for creating a policy and regulatory environment conducive to private investment, which is crucial to achieving food security through creating jobs, connecting countries to global markets, introducing new technologies, influencing domestic norms for quality control, food standards, and consumption patterns, and improving the ability of local people to buy more nutritious food.<sup>39</sup>
93. Within the evaluation sample of case studies, the Africa Roots and Tuber (R&T) Project presented a rare successful example of value chain development by FAO. Implemented from 2015 to 2019 in seven African countries (Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda and Uganda), the project sought to increase and intensify sustainable market-led crop production, strengthen farmer cooperatives involved in the cassava and potato value chains, and improve their access to finance to help them secure modern equipment to convert raw agricultural produces into marketable food derivatives. In the case of Malawi, the project worked with a large number of partners including Universal Industries Inc. to promote the cassava value chain. The changes from 2013-14 to 2016-17 were considerable; over the project area cassava output increased to 5.1 million Mt from 4.8 million Mt. The number of farmers growing cassava also increased markedly, and the uptake of improved varieties nearly doubled.
94. A few promising initiatives such as the Research and Technology (R&T) project and Hand-in-Hand notwithstanding, there is insufficient involvement of the private sector in many of the products and services delivered by FAO. For instance, aquaculture is a rapidly evolving sector driving much investment and trade, yet FAO's work on Blue Growth focusses on communities, not on the private sector *stricto sensu*. South-South and Triangular Cooperation projects involved mainly state actors. In locust control, professionals see relationships with pesticide companies as potentially corruptive. Even the farmer field schools methodology focuses in majority on staple crops, with only a small number of projects supporting cash crops (e.g. cotton in Mozambique).
95. It is important to stress that the private sector can be part of the solution. In the case of locust control for instance, professionals reckon that they lack effective and modern molecules for locust control that could be less-ecologically damaging than the organophosphates still in use for this purpose. Therefore, greater research and investment from pesticide companies into this domain would be part of the solution.
96. Another way to "out-scale" is through consumer pressure, to make market forces work in favour of a transition towards more sustainable food systems. This was an approach used in the case of the food label law in Chile (Argentina and Mexico is also going in that direction). It was also used in the SIPAM project in Morocco, which revitalizes Oasian agro-ecosystems through a sustainable, integrated landscape approach including the promotion of biodiversity through organic agricultural products. This resulted in some cases in the rapid increase in farmers' incomes due to the valorization of their traditional products and knowledge through bio-certification. Similar 'SIPAMs' have been launched (replicated) in other regions of Morocco by other national stakeholders. The reflection is currently moving towards the creation of a set of national criteria, validated by FAO. However, FAO's work on consumer empowerment is recent, generally underdeveloped, and the domain still

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<sup>39</sup> This last finding is a result from a study of 50 major private agribusiness investments in Africa and Asia: W. Speller *et al.*, "The Impact of Larger-Scale Agricultural Investments on Local Communities: Updated Voices from the Field," Food and Agriculture Global Practice Discussion Paper No. 12 (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2017)

poorly understood. More work would be done to help markets valorize good agricultural practices through social media campaigns, TV shows, cooks and gastronomic societies, etc.

97. It must be stressed that education of food producers, traders and consumers is central in the transition to more sustainable food systems.<sup>40</sup> This transition is knowledge-intensive. Support to national education institutions is potentially an extremely useful entry point for this reason. It was used well by the Education for Effective Nutrition in Action (ENACT) course, for instance. In Burkina Faso, a similar course on nutrition-sensitive agriculture was added to the curriculum by some vocational schools in agriculture and rural development, thanks to FAO's support. Training a new generation of extension agents, even with a somewhat superficial course on nutrition-sensitive agriculture as was admittedly the case in Burkina, can also yield an impact at scale by changing mindsets.

### 3.4. Harnessing innovations for development

**Finding 23. The most advanced areas in terms of innovation and digital technologies are the Desert Locust Information System (DLIS) and the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), as well as access and capacity to process satellite imagery, leveraged in a variety of FAO projects, e.g. in land registration.**

**Finding 24. Encouraging open access to rich developmental data is an area where FAO has much potential, and is showing progress. Another area of growth is the development of telephone apps. However, efforts to crowd-source data on transboundary pests have had mixed results.**

**Finding 25. FAO has started to use social media to reach a wide audience and support a large-scale transformation of agriculture. There is potential for further use, for instance on nutrition education or extension for good agricultural practices, but corporate support to digital solutions was often mentioned by staff as a restrictive factor.**

98. Among the reviewed body of work, the most advanced areas were those which started the soonest historically: the Desert Locust Information System (DLIS, dating back to 1974), the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS, 1975), as well as access and capacity to process satellite imagery (FAO, n/d).
99. GIEWS has built a strong and broad dataset over the years covering production and trade estimates by crop and country, prices, meteorological and remote sensing data, etc. It has also developed several web-based tools to facilitate widespread access and analysis of this data, e.g. the country cereal balance sheets (CCBS), the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) that monitors world prices for four commodities (wheat, maize, rice and sorghum), prospective reports for specific countries and crops, the Agricultural Stress Index (ASI) for drought monitoring, and the Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) Tool. GIEWS has provided the empirical backbone for a lot of analytical work on food and nutrition security by FAO, including the computation of various SDG indicators, thus is an important asset for FAO.
100. DLIS is more narrowly focused on the monitoring of one transboundary pest: Desert Locust. Data collection is done by national teams surveying Desert Locust populations, using a handheld tablet (eLocust3) that comes with a mapping/navigation capability and can

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<sup>40</sup> SDG Target 4.7 reads: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

display vegetation and rainfall images. Data from national teams is transmitted in real time via satellite to their national locust control unit and to the FAO DLIS in headquarters. The data is combined with weather and habitat data and satellite imagery to assess the current locust situation and provide forecasts of up to six weeks. This information is then disseminated by an e-mail list, the Locust Watch website and social media (FAO, 2020e). eLocust tablets can only be used by trained professionals. In the current crisis, an effort was made to *crowd-source* locust data through a version of eLocust3 developed for android mobile phones, called eLocust3M (M for mobile) in Kenya and other countries. Similarly, FAO has developed and rolled out the FAMEWS android app for fall armyworm monitoring in a number of countries. These efforts to crowd-source data on transboundary pests have had mixed results, as the quality and regularity of the data are sometimes heterogeneous.

101. FAO is also testing apps for price monitoring with farmer organizations in a number of countries, e.g. in Liberia and Rwanda. This technology has potential (allowing producers and buyers alike to identify good marketing outlets) and is experiencing rapid growth.
102. Access and capacity to process satellite imagery is a long-time strength of the Organization. It is currently being leveraged in a large number of “products” and approaches, such as the CRFS programme implemented in a dozen of large metropolitan areas worldwide; early warning systems such as GIEWS and DLIS as already mentioned; support to land registration programmes in the Balkans, Sierra Leone and Uganda. Technologies can also help to promote social inclusion. The use of Solutions for Open Land Administration (SOLA) technology where communities participate in the development of maps within their community, for example, has encouraged youth to participate and has also empowered the communities to be part of solving their tenure challenges.
103. Encouraging open access to a rich developmental data is an area where FAO has much potential and is showing progress. The Collect Earth platform jointly developed with Google under FAO's OpenForis suite of tools is a tool that enables access to high and very high resolution satellite imagery for a wide variety of purposes (FAO *et al.*, n/d). Recently, Google and FAO launched the Earth Map tool that leverages maps, statistics and satellite imagery to support FAO's Hand-in-Hand geospatial platform (FAO, n/d). Earth Map allows for the monitoring of changes and trends on the Earth's surface in a way that does not require users to master coding. FAO has started to use social media to reach a wide audience and support a large-scale transformation of agriculture, although it may not be the most active UN agency in this regard. There is potential for growth in order to reach a wide audience and support a large-scale transformation of agriculture, for instance in topics such as nutrition education as well as in extension for good agricultural practices. However, corporate support to digital tools development and social media was often described by staff as more control-oriented than service-oriented.

## 4 FAO's comparative strengths

### 4.1. Structures and products

**Finding 26. FAO's complex governance structure, combining sectorial Committees, Regional Conferences as well as a variety of issue-specific Commissions, mirrors to a degree its organizational structure. This is both a strength in terms of close engagement of Members in their Organization's activities, and a weakness in that it reinforces the famous 'silos' that the previous Strategic Framework tried to break or bridge, and results in a proliferation of sectorial knowledge products and approaches on SDG 2-related areas.**

**Finding 27. Existing integrative products (e.g. the Food Chain Crisis Bulletin, the VGGTs and RAI guidelines) that do not squarely belong to one sector or another were found at a disadvantage in terms of finding a stable institutional home in the FAO sectorial structure.**

**Finding 28. In this context, regional offices and programmes play an important role to promote integrative solutions and approaches, at least within their region. Interregional exchanges appear more limited.**

104. FAO is built around a sectorial structure. Technical staff at headquarters and in regional offices are lodged in technical departments specialized in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and socio-economics, each reporting to a sectorial Committee of Members (COAG, COFI, COFO and CFS, respectively). The CFS has outgrown its sectorial origin since its reform in 2009 and now involves other UN agencies as well as mechanisms for inclusion of civil society and the private sector, but other Committees have remained purely sectorial. This governance structure also includes Regional Conferences as well as a variety of commissions specialized on narrower topics of interest, such the Commission on Commodity Problems (CCP), the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the Desert Locust Control Commission (DLCC), itself sub-divided into three regional commissions. The governance structure mirrors to a degree the organizational structure. This is both a strength in terms of close engagement of Members in their Organization's activities, and a weakness in that it reinforces the famous 'silos' that the previous Strategic Framework tried to break or bridge. It also leads to a proliferation of sectorial products, such as the various State of the World series, or the development of various "voluntary guidelines" on specific topics, as was already diagnosed in Phase 1.
105. Existing *integrative* products (e.g. the Food Chain Crisis Bulletin, the VGGTs and RAI guidelines) that do not squarely belong to one sector or another were found at a disadvantage in terms of finding a stable institutional home in the FAO sectorial structure at Headquarter.
106. As pointed out above, development takes time, care, continuity and a gradual trial-and error process. It follows that FAO's products and services should be managed over the long-term by teams with some stability and institutional memory, able to aggregate experience and knowledge along the way.
107. In this context, regional offices and programmes play an important role in promoting integrative solutions and approaches, at least within their region. Interregional exchanges appear more limited. Evidently, there should be room for adaptability according to regional and national contexts but within a coherent approach. Yet examples show sharp discrepancies in approaches followed by different regions, even on something as apparently universal as locust control. The recent evaluations of the FAO Strategic

Objectives also found that different FAO regions were implementing the same Strategic Framework in different ways.

108. South-South and Triangular Cooperation has been used to help spread approaches from one region to another, e.g. the FAO-Brazil Partnership. Language was found to be a barrier in some South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) projects, except when working within specific language spheres such as in the countries of the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, to which much Brazilian cooperation went. The expansion of SSTC as a mechanism to promote knowledge exchange has also been limited by other factors such as insufficient visibility, coordination and resources within FAO.

## 4.2. Capacities

**Finding 29. The core of FAO's strength lies in its technical capacity on a wide range of topics relevant to SDG 2. Nevertheless, FAO's technical capacity has been eroded by budget cuts in many areas under SDG 2.**

**Finding 30. Lesser capacities were reported in non-technical domains that are equally relevant to SDG 2, such as in legal, policy, economic and social fields (including conflict sensitive programming), and in knowledge management.**

**Finding 31. Country case studies conducted in Phase 2 confirmed the alarming diagnostic of Phase 1 on the insufficient operational capacity at country level, where it is needed the most. Over the long-term, this issue has eroded the demand for FAO technical support and the relevance of the Agency in the eyes of Members and donors.**

**Finding 32. Current project cycle management and controls lead to a fragmented portfolio with high transaction costs, insufficient strategic oversight and poor visibility of achieved results.**

**Finding 33. FAO is generally perceived as close to the Government, but often in a purely technical (and exclusive) relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture. Less contact and collaborations were reported with other ministries, local government and non-state actors.**

109. Conclusions from Phase 1 on the extent to which FAO's capacities are adequate for supporting the SDGs are largely confirmed by Phase 2. The core of FAO's strength lies in its technical capacity over a wide range of topics relevant to SDG 2, recognized by partners.
110. Lesser capacities were reported in non-technical domains important for SDG support, in particular to "leave no one behind", such as in legal, policy, economic and social fields (including conflict sensitive programming), and in operations, knowledge management, monitoring and communication.
111. Nevertheless, FAO's technical capacity has been eroded. The regular budget (from assessed contributions) has flat-lined in nominal terms since 2012, resulting in the abolition of 235 staff posts from 2012 to 2015 (FAO, 2015). These cuts have reduced in-house expertise in many priority areas for SDG 2 and put operations, permanent staffing, country office management and administration, back-office support functions, and normative work under significant pressure (MOPAN, 2018).
112. The country case studies confirmed the alarming diagnostic of Phase 1 regarding the poor level of operational capacities at the country level, where it is needed the most. FAO's procedures and centralized administration processes would need to be revised if FAO is to implement programmes at scale successfully.

113. A majority of the case studies highlighted slow procurement and hiring, delays in signing agreements and partnerships, excessive administrative centralization and bureaucracy as some of the most important impediments to scaling-up FAO's work under SDG 2. The delays in administrative processes have negative implications in terms of impact, cost-efficiency and relations with stakeholders and beneficiaries, particularly when needs are impelling. This has eroded the demand for FAO's technical support and the relevance of the agency at the country level, as well as support from donors. Even country case studies showing very significant successes reported administrative problems.
114. Also frequently cited were the lack of continuity and sustainability of discrete projects without follow-up, resulting in rapid turnover of staff and consultants and loss of momentum. This relates to the lack of a programme approach and tools to support it in FAO, highlighted in Phase 1 report, as well as to the tendency to fund small, impermanent pilot projects, as explained in the next section.
115. Weak project cycle management and controls have hindered FAO's efforts to move towards a more coherent programmatic approach. A recent audit of the project cycle pointed to a variety of issues in the way FAO designs and reports against its projects, including the proliferation of minuscule projects, weak quality assurance processes, insufficient stakeholder consultation and unclear identification of beneficiaries, and difficulties in data aggregation across projects due to poor project "tagging" and inefficient monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems (FAO, 2019b).<sup>41</sup>
116. The implementation of the audit recommendations is awaiting the roll-out of the Project Lifecycle Management System (PROMYS) that is currently being developed to replace the Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS).
117. Convening capacity and neutrality remain strong assets at global and regional levels and featured prominently in some 'signature product reviews', e.g. on transboundary plant pests and agroecology. This convening capacity is uneven at the country level.
118. FAO is perceived as close to the Government in a majority of the case study reports, in particular to the Ministry of Agriculture. Fewer cases indicate close relations with other governmental and non-state actors. The depth and breadth of partnerships in country appears to be a good predictor of the quality of a programmatic portfolio. Broad partnerships imply some degree of programmatic footprint in country as well as attention to environmental, social and economic considerations, away from a purely technical and exclusive relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture.

### 4.3. Knowledge

**Finding 34. Rapid, horizontal information sharing and co-creation of knowledge through collaboration are growing into the dominant paradigm for knowledge management, progressively replacing top-down diffusion of a centrally-held body of knowledge.**

**Finding 35. The paucity of tools for knowledge management in FAO was underlined in Phase 1 report. In the absence of formal tools, knowledge on SDG 2-related practices is shared 'organically' through networks of colleagues and partners that can easily form silos.**

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<sup>41</sup> Only 39 percent of project documents were developed after due consultation of in-country stakeholders. Less than 50 percent included an adequate description of proposed implementing arrangements and a properly designed budget and work plan, whereas only 48 percent of sampled project documents included a clear definition of target beneficiaries.

**Finding 36. The Organization has historically tended to manage technical assistance in a centralized, top-down manner, which does not facilitate horizontal transfers of knowledge and often fails to document and build upon field experience.**

**Finding 37. In particular, the evaluation identifies a difficulty to translate knowledge from one "cultural sphere" to the next, which could be due to linguistic and other cultural differences.**

119. The transition to sustainable development is knowledge-intensive. Is it possible to summon this collective intelligence, at a time when the spread of a "post-truth culture" seems to undermine traditional values of science and expertise?
120. Resolving this requires a change in the way knowledge is produced and shared: towards a more participatory model, away from the centralist model of all-knowing experts sharing their wealth of erudition with mostly ignorant students. The COVID-19 epidemic has shown that intellectual leadership and expertise still matter; and that radical change is possible and even necessary going forward.<sup>42</sup> The epidemic also illustrated another trend: rapid, horizontal information sharing and co-creation of knowledge through collaboration have replaced ex-cathedra diffusion of centrally-held body of knowledge, as the dominant paradigm for knowledge management.
121. Co-creation of knowledge is exactly the approach promoted by the farmer field schools since the 1990s. It is also, to a large extent, the principle behind an organization such as FAO supporting the implementation of a national programme. The point is to learn by doing, together, on topics of salient importance locally. In contrast, a pilot project exhibiting some FAO-centric approach can be compared to a demonstration plot showing farmers what to do in a top-down manner. This old paradigm often fails to convince farmers, and similarly many FAO pilot projects fail to convince governments. In fairness, some pilot projects succeed sometimes and gradually grow into larger programmes, but in that process, moving to a collaborative approach is always required at some stage.
122. Phase 1 of this evaluation insisted on the paucity of tools for knowledge management in FAO. This diagnosis was confirmed by Phase 2's country case studies. The general picture remains one of a fragmented organization when it comes to knowledge management. Three of the 15 country case studies and many of the staff who answered the survey conducted for this evaluation pointed at the lack of a worldwide, harmonized system to collect monitoring data and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and necessary adjustments as a key constraint.<sup>43</sup>
123. In the absence of formal tools, knowledge is shared 'organically' through networks of colleagues and partners, which can easily form silos, or even 'schools'. FAO is a multilingual organization, yet knowledge transfer within its staff and between its Members remains hindered, notably by linguistic differences. Knowledge spreads through language. Anglophone staff tend to work in Anglophone countries, Francophone in Francophone countries, etc. This may explain a certain difficulty for FAO to translate knowledge from one "cultural sphere" to the next, e.g. from Latin America to Europe and Central Asia, or from Africa to the Near East.

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<sup>42</sup> For example, in terms of considering social factors besides economic ones and promoting shorter value chains to reduce dependency on international trade. This evaluation is an example: it was conducted at the local level, then results aggregated at the global level without any international travel involved.

<sup>43</sup> The survey received a total of 548 responses. Six entries were incomplete and not included in the analysis, which focuses on 542 entries.

124. In addition, the Organization has historically tended to manage knowledge and technical assistance in a centralized, top-down manner, which does not facilitate horizontal transfers of knowledge. Still today, some headquarters divisions have limited interactions with country offices, such as the Investment Centre, EST and others. More generally, FAO experts at headquarters are not always aware of the field programme under their topical area, and this makes them less able to contribute to it. A certain tension between global programmes and norms and local realities is natural and unavoidable, but it is important to maintain a dialogue between theory and practice.
125. Mass education and social media have created a new knowledge ecosystem. In such an ecosystem, people's knowledge must be leveraged rather than ignored. This calls for a humbler posture from experts but also for the methodological skills to integrate farmers', fisher folks' and other food producers' knowledge into a scientific perspective of co-experimentation (traditional and indigenous knowledge is generally expressed in non-scientific terms). The Phase 1 report called for a more positive narrative on traditional farming practices and knowledge. Rare are the examples documented in Phase 2 of an attempt at documenting traditional knowledge.<sup>44</sup>
126. Policymakers, researchers and extensionists tend to favour productivist and intensive approaches derived from the Green Revolution (mechanization, improved seeds, introduced animal breeding stock imported feed, fertilizer and the likes) that convey a gleaming image of modernity, often at the expense of traditional knowledge dismissed as atavism.
127. The discrepancy between the type of learning applied in FFS in practice and the theory of co-creation of knowledge (see section 2.1) shows that old habits die hard, and that the new knowledge paradigm is harder to implement than the previous one.
128. Nevertheless, the FFS goes in the right direction. A second 'Green Revolution', promoting a simple package of 'modern' knowledge delivered in a top-down manner, is not what the achievement of the SDGs calls for. Whereas the first Green Revolution managed to produce much more food for a growing world population, this came at a widely acknowledged cost in terms of pollution, encroachment of natural habitats, loss of biodiversity and the likes. The SDGs ask us to mend these problems, not aggravate them.
129. After years of stagnation, ODA transfers towards agriculture are growing again. The world can ill-afford to repeat the mistakes of the past. The dearth of investments in agriculture experienced during the 1990s and 2000s was following upon a slew of so-called "integrated development programmes" implemented in prior decades. These tended to be simplistic, standardized investments, oblivious to the local actors and to their knowledge, using imported modern technologies not always easy to implement and maintain locally, and they often failed to make a sustainable impact.
130. The Green Revolution also failed to apply in dry ecosystems. Despite all the policies and programmes aiming to modernize the animal husbandry sector and settle pastoralists, extensive pastoralism remains the most resilient and productive form of natural resource management in drylands. Some 43 percent of Africans (270 million people) are pastoralists. Mobility plays a key role in a multitude of paths to sustainable crop-livestock integration (FAO & IFAD, 2016). The documents emanating from the IDRISSE programme in the Horn of Africa duly underlined the economic rationale of proactively supporting these systems,

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<sup>44</sup> One took place in Angola where an FAO project listed animal diseases and their traditional cures in both local and scientific language.

and recommended that conditions for pastoral mobility (e.g. land tenure, grazing reserves, corridors, cross-border movements, etc.) are secured, refraining from interventions that compete with pastoral production.<sup>45</sup>

131. This does not mean a return to the past, or to antiquated production and livelihoods systems, because these production systems are still alive and constantly adapting. Smallholders are eager to learn and desiring to invest in order to earn a better income, adapt to climate change, urbanization and other trends, and transform their practices for greater sustainability. They deserve help and advice, but also some respect for their skills and knowledge.

#### **4.4. Financial and other resources**

**Finding 38. Voluntary contributions have grown in recent years, reflective of the value placed on FAO by its development partners. Partnerships and resources mobilized through South-South and Triangular Cooperation have also increased. Nevertheless, both traditional resource mobilization and South-South and Triangular Cooperation remain reliant on a relatively small base of resource partners.**

**Finding 39. Climate resilience is an area of growth, e.g. through GEF and several large GCF proposals signed over the past few years. FAO is in a unique position to design applications for such funds, a process which is notoriously challenging in terms of the data requirements and the breadth of social and ecological dimensions to take into account.**

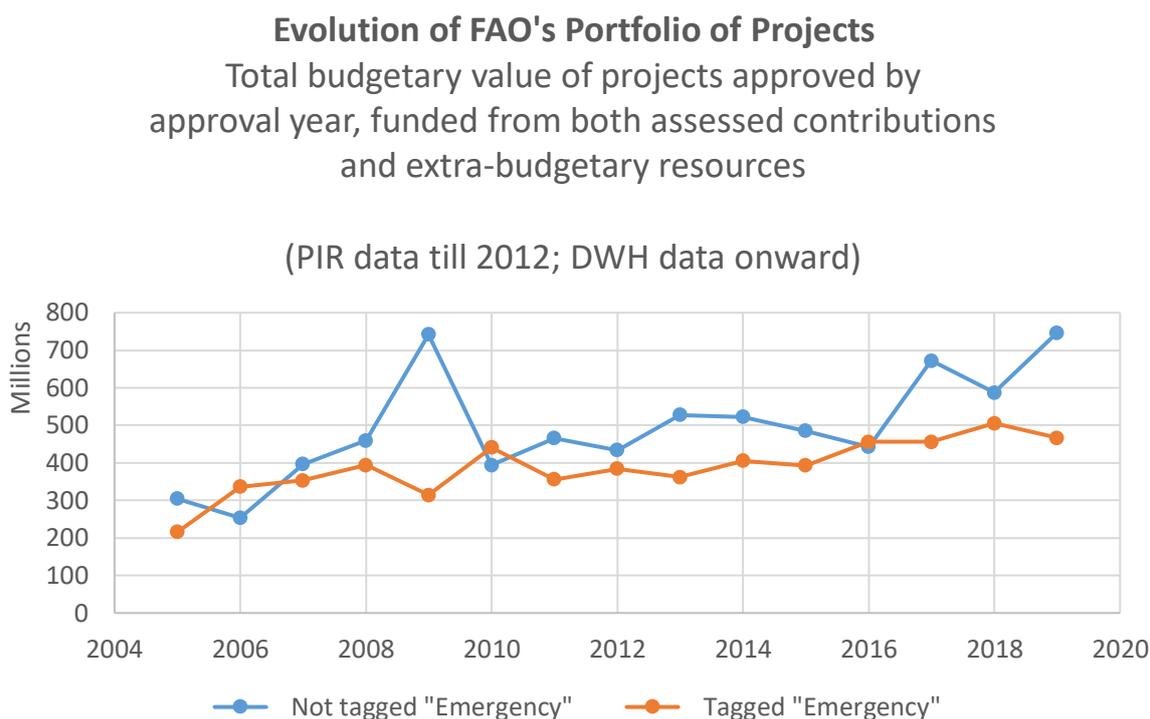
132. As pointed in Phase 1, FAO's voluntary contributions have grown in recent years, reflective of the value placed on FAO by its development partners. The level of funding for developmental activities<sup>46</sup> is growing faster than the emergency portfolio, and has in 2019 reached the levels seen after the food price crisis in 2008 (Figure 3). However FAO remains reliant on a relatively small base of key resource partners with more than half of voluntary contributions coming from just five donors. Only one country case study spontaneously reported a high level of donor confidence in FAO in the country as an opportunity.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> A number of large investment projects were designed building on this new thinking on pastoralism in the Horn of Africa, funded by the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

<sup>46</sup> Using as an indicator the absence of the "emergency" tag in the Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS).

<sup>47</sup> This does not necessarily indicate a lack of donor support in other countries, but simply means that the issue was not raised as a salient point in their case study reports.

**Figure 3: Voluntary contributions, from 2004 to 2020**

Source: OED Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS)

133. Climate finance and resilience is an area of growth. FAO successfully secured several large GCF proposals and is in a unique position to design applications for such funds, a process which is notoriously challenging and requires diverse technical knowledge bases; sound scientific, analytic and data-based components; a comprehensive social inclusion and environmental dimension; and proven and accepted measurement verification methodologies.
134. The reliance on other mechanisms to mobilize partners and resources (both financial and in-kind) such as SSTC, has increased at a slower pace. Significant challenges have hampered the use of SSTC as a strategic mechanism for mobilizing partnerships and resources for development in FAO during the evaluated period, including insufficient visibility by senior management, collaboration with other departments and offices in FAO, and frequent changes in leadership and direction.
135. The number of partners contributing to the mechanism with financial and in-kind aid has grown over the years. FAO has successfully mobilized long-term partnerships and trust funds that now include Turkey (USD 30 million since 2006), Brazil (more than USD 60 million since 2012), Morocco (USD 1 million since 2014) and Mexico (USD 15 million since 2015), in addition to China (over USD 130 million between 2009 and 2019). FAO has been less successful in attracting so-called triangular partners.<sup>48</sup> There are some positive examples with Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, South Korea and Spain, but they have not been widely disseminated as Triangular Cooperation. IFAD and WFP have reported similar difficulties.

<sup>48</sup> The conceptual definition of Triangular Cooperation is not clear. In practice, within FAO it tends to pertain to whether a Northern partner is part of the project or not.

## 4.5. UN reforms and Rome-based Agencies collaboration

**Finding 40. The UN reform and increased RBA collaboration are seen as opportunities to strengthen FAO's position and to scale-up FAO approaches at country level, where the reform is now being initiated.**

**Finding 41. The reform envisages a more cohesive and demand-driven UN offer of services in country. It will require greater decision-making power and financial autonomy for the FAO representations in country.**

**Finding 42. RBA collaboration is offset at the moment by competition and high transaction costs. While the three RBAs share a common agenda, they approach it from intrinsically different mandates, a primary reason why they were conceived as separate entities in the first place. Bridging across their different natures and overcoming competition for donor funding remain important challenges.**

136. FAO has had a very positive attitude towards the "UN reform" (formally known as the "repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda") and is quite active in all streams of the design process. The FAO liaison office in New York serves as the Rome-based Agencies (RBA) hub for reform-related issues. FAO is also committed to the reform financially and has doubled its contribution under the new cost-sharing arrangement (USD 4.7 million paid in 2019) to support the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system. FAO has actively engaged in the work of the UN Internal Review Team to elaborate the final proposal on the UN regional architecture. The reform appears more complex at regional level, where United Nations agencies have very diverse architectures. It is too early to assess its effect at country level, as implementation is only starting.
137. Phase 2 did not collect evidence that would lead to a significant rephrasing of the conclusions of Phase 1. The reform is still at its early stages on the ground.
138. On RBA and UN collaboration, Phase 2 examined the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP-RWEE) designed and implemented with FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women. It found that the JP-RWEE demonstrates the usefulness of interagency collaboration and that it can work if well planned. The programme has generated a lot of interest and has potential to be scaled to other locations and other countries. It is currently being evaluated and the results of the evaluation will inform planning of the next phase. The review also noted that some UN partners such as UN Women were adopting the DIMITRA Clubs methodology in some countries as a result of working with FAO. This indicates that UN collaboration on joint programmes can potentially be a channel for out-scaling useful FAO approaches.
139. The RBAs signed an ambitious five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2018 responding to the call by the Secretary-General, in the context of the UN reform. On the analytical front, the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) is now a joint production with other RBAs, UNICEF and WHO as a way to boost its visibility and uptake and raise the coherence and credibility of FNS data. However, the roll out by WFP of "Zero Hunger Strategic Reviews" in a large number of developing countries was a missed opportunity for collaboration. These "SDG 2 reviews" have seldom involved other RBA's and were conceived with the sole aim of orienting WFP's contributions to SDG 2, in contradiction to SDG principles.
140. An August 2019 MOPAN case study of RBA country collaboration in four countries concluded that so far, RBA collaboration is typically at project level and somewhat

transactional in nature rather than strategic, and that “RBA collaboration is held back by a lack of alignment of business processes, by the fragmented nature of funding flows and by how donors work with individual agencies. [...] So far, staff at country level are working at project level and in relatively informal ways. They are finding workarounds when the differences in planning cycles, funding environments and capacity on the ground create obstacles to joint working” (MOPAN, 2019). The MOPAN case study also stressed that “one should not assume uncritically that more collaboration is always a positive: partnerships needs to have a purpose.”

141. The onus should be on what is necessary to achieve scale and impact based on each agency's comparative advantage. While the three RBA's share a common agenda, they approach it from intrinsically different mandates, which is a primary reason why they were conceived as separate entities in the first place. Bridging across their different natures and overcoming competition for donor funding remain important challenges, beyond the low hanging fruit of sharing information, facilitation of each other's work opportunistically and working at project level.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

142. SDG 2 aims to end hunger and malnutrition and transform food systems towards greater sustainability. It forms the core mandate and business of FAO. The Organization must rise to the challenge. There are only ten years left to 2030, and if this evaluation is of any use, it will be to stress the urgency of change. The Food Systems Summit next year is expected to emphasize the need for rapid transformation. This report argues that FAO cannot help transform agriculture and food systems without first transforming itself.
143. The first phase of the evaluation provided a set of preliminary conclusions and recommendations. These were tested during the second phase against an array of country-level practices and global and regional products. Phase 2 did not invalidate any of the conclusions and recommendations derived from Phase 1. Rather, it confirmed some and nuanced others. It also helped to identify constraints and opportunities at the country level, as well as in areas where rapid progress can be made by upscaling and learning from the identified good practices. As such, the text below follows generally the same structure as the conclusions and recommendations arrived at in Phase 1.
144. Another evaluation will assess FAO's contribution to SDG 13 on Climate Action. Therefore, the present report does not address this issue, nor its relationship with SDG 2. However, its increasing urgency suggests a need for greater inclusion in planning and implementation of SDG 2 targets, to be confirmed by the SDG 13 evaluation.

**Conclusion 1. Much progress has been achieved in positioning FAO on the SDGs, especially at the global level.**

**The Organization is committed to support a global sustainable development framework that it helped design and that offers ample space to deploy its capacities and communicate on its mandate. Significant progress has been made on communicating internally and externally FAO's role in support of the SDGs, and in equipping the staff to do so as well. FAO has engaged with the current UN reform – strongly connected to the SDGs – with a very collaborative attitude at the global level.**

145. FAO helped shape the narrative of the SDGs and of SDG 2 in particular, and feels a strong ownership of the 2030 Agenda as a whole, notably its focus on interactions and trade-offs between sectors. The Organization is committed to supporting a global sustainable development framework that it helped design and that offers ample space to deploy its capacities and communicate on its mandate. Awareness of the SDG Framework is widespread across FAO and is used in the conversations and engagements with many third parties – proving a useful instrument in that regards to be speaking the same language and working to common, even shared, objectives.
146. Although this evaluation did not evaluate FAO's support to other SDGs, it did evidence the importance of SDG 2 for FAO, including in financial terms. That FAO is working on SDG 2 much more than on any other SDG is self-evident given the name and mandate of the Organization.
147. FAO is well positioned at the global level. It has engaged productively in the current UN reform orchestrated by the Secretary General with a view to strengthening the United Nations Development Agencies fitness for purpose in the SDG era, bringing to the discussion a very collaborative attitude, a sense of realism and by some accounts even some creativity. However, the reform is yet to be implemented in many countries and it is unclear how it will impact FAO's operations and positioning at this level.

148. FAO's work in support of SDG indicator measurement was not reviewed in the SDG 2 evaluation as it was the subject of a parallel evaluation on FAO's support to national statistics. However, it needs to be recalled that FAO has rolled out a systematic capacity development programme to help countries measure the SDG indicators, which includes regional training workshops, technical assistance missions and e-learning courses, an activity that contributes positively to its positioning on the SDGs at both the global and national levels.

**Conclusion 2. FAO's position is weaker at the national level, due to a limited programmatic footprint.**

**At the country level, FAO is perceived as both a trusted provider of technical assistance – a role in which it does well – and a donor or implementer of programmes on the ground – a role undermined by its operational weakness and excessive reliance on small pilot projects. Administrative delays have negative implications in terms of impact, cost-efficiency and relations with national stakeholders, beneficiaries and resource partners. They have eroded FAO's reputation, the demand for its technical support, and the perceived relevance of the agency at country level.**

149. Phase 1 concluded that FAO has yet to transform its structures, delivery mechanisms and programmes in order to better support countries to achieve SDG 2. This conclusion is confirmed by Phase 2. FAO's position was found to be much weaker at country levels than at the global level. This stems from a combination of factors including limited programmatic footprint, weak operational capacities in many country offices, and excessive fragmentation of its portfolio and project cycle management tools.
150. Also frequently mentioned were the lack of visibility of its programmes, and the limited sustainability of discrete projects without follow-up. FAO is perceived as being both a trusted provider of technical assistance – a role in which it does well – and a donor or implementer of programmes on the ground – a role undermined by its poor operational culture and excessive reliance on small pilot projects.
151. The delays in administrative processes have negative implications in terms of impact, cost-efficiency and relations with stakeholders and beneficiaries. This has eroded the demand for FAO technical support and the relevance of the agency at country level, as well as support from donors. This being said, fiduciary obligations impose certain constraints and evidently justify a degree of administrative control.
152. Moreover, the ongoing UN reform (yet to be implemented in many countries) envisages a more cohesive and demand-driven UN offer of services in country, and will require greater decision-making power and financial autonomy for FAO country offices. The entire UN system must come together to work more seamlessly across all SDGs. This goes beyond the Rome-based Agencies, to include e.g. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on governance, WHO on human health, UNICEF on nutrition and UN Habitat on rural-urban linkages. Agility and rapid response are all the more required in the face of growing unpredictability and risks – whether they come from conflict, locusts or a new strain of coronavirus.
- **Recommendation 1. Weak operational capacity in FAO country offices is a strategic liability, and needs systemic strengthening over the long-term. The UN reform requires greater decision-making power and financial autonomy for FAO country offices, as well as significant analytical support to their capacity to**

**engage with other UN agencies on an equal analytical footing at country level. FAO should use the UN reform and the PROMYS initiative as opportunities to streamline its project cycle management and controls, lower the administrative burden, reduce portfolio fragmentation, and ensure a more programmatic approach to portfolio management articulated within the new Country Programming Framework and connected to the Strategic Framework.**

**Conclusion 3. FAO is acting at scale when it collaborates with others to support local initiatives, programmes and policies.**

**Many of the reviewed FAO national projects were of a small size, due to the lack of a programme approach in FAO as well as the tendency to fund small, stand-alone pilot projects. Supporting national initiatives and programmes is potentially more impactful. Other entry points currently being used by FAO to act at scale include legal support, regional programmes and policy processes, support to trade and investment, climate finance, UN collaboration, South-South Cooperation, and education (both formal and informal). The depth and breadth of partnerships in country appears to be increasing progressively in some countries, but partnerships with the private sector as well as further mobilization of domestic resources remain insufficient to achieve an impact on food systems.**

153. This evaluation purposefully searched for good practices at country level in a wide array of domains and countries. The 'harvest' it brought back includes some interesting cases and practices at scale as well as many small size projects, not yet matured into good practices tested and replicated by others. Their work is mainly focused on production and does not extend much beyond the farm gate.
154. This relates to the lack of a programmatic approach and tools to support it in FAO, highlighted in Phase 1 report, as well as to the tendency to fund small, impermanent pilot projects. In contrast, many of the practices at scale identified in this report were about FAO supporting a programme initiated and managed by national stakeholders. Supporting national/state initiatives and programmes – such as the Zero Budget Natural Farming Programme of Andhra Pradesh in India, institutionalization of the FFS methodology as a rural extension methodology in Angola, or the expansion of the national water utility's reach in rural areas in Morocco – is potentially more impactful at real scale than using pilot projects to demonstrate innovations conceived elsewhere, because it builds on local dynamics and demands. A related *modus operandi* is to use UN collaboration on joint programmes as a venue to out-scale useful approaches piloted by FAO.
155. This approach allows FAO to concentrate on what it can do well: i.e. technical advice, legal and policy support, data management, participatory methodologies, coordination/convening, while other partners conduct more operational tasks. In this manner, FAO can usefully contribute at scale to the development of a country, in a collaborative, joint-up manner with other partners. This being said, providing technical support to an ongoing national programme still requires some capacity to deliver in a timely manner.
156. Over the years FAO has supported the preventive control of various locust species across the globe, in Africa, the Near East, South-West Asia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Peru, Madagascar and other locales, as well as a system of regional commissions to leverage regional coordination and solidarity. Its current response to the Desert Locust crisis in East Africa and Yemen illustrates the scale at which FAO can operate to help its Members manage transboundary plant pests.

157. In terms of upscaling, legal support stands out among the interventions in policy advisory reviewed for this evaluation as one of the most productive and effective areas which deserves to be expanded. The evaluation found that laws were more sustainable than policies and stood better chances of being applied than policy statements. Evidently, the two are not mutually exclusive and countries may find it appropriate to start with drafting a policy, later translated into law.
158. The work on monitoring commodity markets is inherently global and was leveraged in 2020 to underwrite FAO's analysis of the COVID-19 crisis impact on food security and value chains, which illustrates its potential utility on a wide scale.
159. Investment is obviously key to achieving SDG 2, but there is a significant gap (estimated by the World Bank at USD 80 billion per year) between current investments and what would be required to achieve the Goal. The Investment Centre has provided robust support to agricultural investment through international finance institutions. The World Bank and other institutional investors are rediscovering agriculture and food production after years of relative neglect, although one has yet to bounce "from billions to trillions".<sup>49</sup>
160. Strengthening the mobilization and effective use of domestic resources is also at the core of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in Financing for Development. FAO's role in this regard includes supporting the design and implementation of specific investment programmes (e.g. the NAIPs of CAADP), but also and more broadly helping to strengthen the policy and legal environment, supporting the development of formal education systems and extension services, facilitating partnerships with producer and consumer organizations, the private sector and other development actors, and promoting South-South and Triangular Cooperation.
161. SDG 2 is comprehensive and insists upon a broad systemic view of food and nutrition security, thus calling for policy coherence between food and nutrition policies, agriculture development policies and trade policies. This is rarely the case in practice. For instance in a number of country case studies it was observed that agricultural policies tended to favour a narrow range of staple crops, whereas nutrition policies called for diversification of agriculture.
162. Another important role for FAO would be to help strengthen the institutional performance of line ministries (e.g. Ministries of Agriculture), which sometimes constrain their capacity to mobilize resources from the national budget and from development partners.
163. Climate finance is an area of growth in the FAO programme. FAO successfully secured several large GCF proposals and is in a unique position to design applications for such funds, a process which is notoriously challenging and requires diverse technical knowledge bases; sound scientific, analytic and data-based components; a comprehensive social inclusion and environmental dimension; and proven and accepted measurement verification methodologies.
164. The use of SSTC has increased at a slow pace. Significant challenges have hampered its use as a strategic mechanism for mobilizing partnerships and resources for development in FAO during the evaluated period, including inadequate visibility, high leadership turnover and insufficient collaboration with other departments and offices in FAO.

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<sup>49</sup> The phrase refers to the idea that the SDGs are very ambitious and that they demand equal ambition in using the "billions" in ODA and in available development resources to attract, leverage and mobilize "trillions" in investments of all kinds: public and private, national and global, in both capital and capacity.

165. Another way to “out-scale” is through consumer pressure, to make market forces work in favour of a transition towards more sustainable food systems, as illustrated by the well-known case of the food label law in Chile and in the SIPAM project in Morocco, which revitalizes Oasian agro-ecosystems through a sustainable, integrated landscape approach including the promotion of biodiversity through organic agricultural products to raise incomes. However, FAO’s work on consumer empowerment is underdeveloped, and the domain still poorly understood.
166. Education of food producers, traders and consumers is central in the transition to more sustainable food systems. This transition is knowledge-intensive. Support to national education institutions, including vocational schools, is potentially an extremely useful entry point for this reason. It was used well by the ENACT course on nutrition, for instance, as well as in Burkina Faso.
167. One requirement to act at scale is the capacity to collaborate with a broad array of partners, including the private sector. The SDGs are holistic and demand attention to a broad range of environmental, social and economic considerations, and therefore they require a move away from a purely technical and exclusive relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture.
168. However, historically FAO has had limited links with private entities and non-state actors. In the recent Evaluation of the FAO Strategy for Partnerships with the Private Sector, the due diligence process to vet partnerships with private entities was described as cumbersome and lengthy, hence limiting the number of such partnerships. It is important to stress that the private sector is indeed sometimes part of the problem, but that it is also part of the solution.
169. The depth and breadth of partnerships in country appears to be a good predictor of the quality of a programmatic portfolio. FAO is described as close to the Government, and in particular close to the Ministry of Agriculture in a large majority of the case study reports. Among the latter, fewer reported close relations with other ministries, local governments and non-state actors. These cases generally correlate well with the best case studies, as broad partnerships imply some degree of programmatic footprint in country as well as attention to environmental, social and economic considerations, away from a purely technical and exclusive relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture.
170. The most creative and innovative pieces of work at the global, regional and national levels are often funded from extra-budgetary resources, given the tight financial situation of the Organization, and therefore often somewhat unstable institutionally. However, the development of trust funds and other forms of flexible programmatic arrangements has provided greater continuity. This trend should continue with a more vigorous introduction of programme approach, i.e. the capacity to regroup different projects into one programme in corporate financial and reporting systems to reduce transaction costs and improve coherence and continuity. Most UN agencies have adopted programme approach decades ago, but FAO keeps managing its projects as discrete entities detached from one another.
- **Recommendation 2. FAO’s procedures and centralized administration processes need to be revised if FAO is to successfully implement or even support large development programmes at scale in a cost-effective manner. FAO must also strengthen its operational skills, and programmatic tools and implementation modalities in order to mobilize more strategic and programmatic voluntary contributions, spend them well in support of SDG 2, and give some visibility to the results achieved. This needs to include an introduction of programme**

**approach (i.e. the ability to regroup different projects into one cohesive programme in corporate financial and reporting systems) to reduce transaction costs and improve continuity of effort.**

- **Recommendation 3. Closer links to the private sector, producer and consumer organizations, education and research institutes and philanthropic organizations are needed to act at scale. The specific strategy with the private sector might require a combination of high-level corporate diplomacy and arms-length engagement through multi-stakeholder platforms. The due diligence process could be adapted to the level of risk and hence to the size of the private entity involved, i.e. adopt a lighter process for partnerships with small-scale private entities than with multinationals.**
- **Recommendation 4. Beyond advocating for greater resource allocation to agriculture and food and nutrition security, there is also a need to better leverage FAO's capacity to improve upon policy, legal and educational environments, to make them more conducive to private investment in agriculture and more coherent, as well as to more systematically strengthen the institutional capacity and resource efficiency in line ministries in order to make them more effective at using their resources and mobilizing new ones.**

**Conclusion 4. The principle of "leave no one behind" is fundamental to FAO's value added. The SDG principle of "leave no one behind" applies universally, even in types of work not a priori amenable to social inclusiveness – such as locust control – in the necessary solidarity between poorer and richer nations. FAO has mainstreamed and emphasized gender to a degree in its programmes and knowledge products, showing that it is possible to make significant advances with a comprehensive effort. Little progress was achieved for other groups, such as the youth, the poor and the extreme poor or indigenous people, notably in work under 2.3 and 2.4 on productivity and natural resource that represents two-third of FAO's work under SDG 2. The principle of "leave no one behind" has not been delineated nor communicated within FAO yet, neither has it been systematically mainstreamed into its programmes and projects. This is unfortunate, since social inclusion, secure tenure rights and solidarity between richer and poorer nations are necessary components of sustainable development. Socially inclusive processes offer a strategic entry point for FAO to contribute to fair and sustainable investment, at the nexus between policy, rights, food security and nutrition, food systems and the environment. In this regard, FAO's capacity to promote the "leave no one behind" principle represents a strength and an integral part of its value added for Members.**

171. Although gender issues are not yet systematically mainstreamed into FAO's programmes and projects, the number of interventions addressing women as producers and entrepreneurs has grown over the years. Methodologies such as the DIMITRA Clubs or the value chain work and the Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE) projects were developed and implemented. FAO's experience with gender shows that it is possible to make significant advances towards leaving no one behind in a relatively short time, with a comprehensive effort at transformation such as the one triggered by the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the integration of gender as a cross-cutting issue within FAO's Strategic Framework.

172. Other groups tend to be left further behind. For the youth, one of the challenges ahead is to identify ways of attracting this particular group to agriculture-related activities. This being said, migration outside of agriculture represents a lifeline for many rural communities, through remittance and by building rural-urban linkages, and a hope for many youth. Another approach is to build upon the youth desire for environmental sustainability, for fairer markets and trade, for modernization and radical change. The SDGs are about their future after all. They also offer useful dynamism and energy, and a strong sense of the urgency of change. The recently created Youth Committee in FAO draws from the same idea.
173. Some types of work were found less directly amenable to social inclusiveness than others. For instance the impact of locust plagues appears near universal. The same applies to the support to commodity markets and international trade to a degree. In those cases, the principle of “leave no one behind” resurfaces at another level: between poor and rich nations. The world cannot afford to leave poor countries behind in the fight against transboundary pests, for instance, because then these countries would become reservoirs, and that would negate the efforts of other countries. Pests and diseases are reminding us that we all share the same planet, and that we must cooperate beyond borders in order to succeed.
174. In this respect, the establishment of the Office of SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs (OSL) reinforces FAO’s commitment to combat inequalities amongst countries.
175. The coherence of the agenda and the convergence of different actors that it allows represent an important asset of the SDGs, to which FAO contributed. States have been adopting policies and programmes to implement the SDGs, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, and many other development actors. Even the private-sector has been speaking the SDG language. In this context, the capacity to promote a number of SDG-related principles such as “leave no one behind” and holistic development is central to FAO’s value proposition, as evidenced by the case studies conducted in this evaluation. The example of the GCF projects, IDDRSI and many others illustrates that key value added for national partners and resource partners alike lies in FAO’s neutrality and capacity to help arbitrate difficult trade-offs through creative, environmentally-conscious and socially inclusive solutions, at the nexus between investment, policy, rights, food security and nutrition, food systems and the environment.
176. This provides an entry point for FAO to leverage its capacity and legitimacy in responsible agricultural investment to facilitate fair and sustainable investment. A shift by FAO to focus on the private sector, public-private partnerships and innovation could negatively affect agro-pastors, fishers and indigenous communities, if their tenure rights are not protected. Instruments such as the RAI Guidelines, the Small Scale Fisheries Guidelines and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security can add to FAO’s comparative advantage by helping the Organization approach the difficult but necessary trade-offs implied by any development, and facilitate their pragmatic resolution by local stakeholders.
177. In the final analysis, the most significant investors in agriculture are the smallholders themselves, investing in their own farms. Protecting secure tenure rights – including through the VGGTs or other guidelines and methodologies – appears a *sine qua non* for robust, sustained private investment in agriculture.
- **Recommendation 5. FAO should step up its efforts to mainstream the principle of “leave no one behind” into its programmes, communication and knowledge**

**products, and to delineate what it can do, i.e. what entry points to use for each vulnerable group. In particular, gender mainstreaming should be owned by the whole Organization, and therefore it should be reflected in its Strategic Framework and accountability systems. Tools that have put to good effect for gender, such as the Country Gender Assessments or the gender marker in project documents, could be extended to other vulnerable groups. It is important for FAO leadership to support this principle, lead its systematic integration, and communicate its value to Members.**

- **Recommendation 6. FAO should develop diversified strategies to help reduce poverty and provide employment to the youth of both genders in food systems, building upon their desire for environmental sustainability, fairer markets and trade, modernization and radical change to explore new modes of production, expand support to food producers (extension, input supply and mechanization, veterinary services, etc.) and improve on downstream aggregation and trade of food produces (farmer organizations, certification schemes, transformation, retail, etc.).**
- **Recommendation 7. A stronger policy engagement is required for FAO to rise to the challenges of the SDG era, and in particular to approach trade-offs between economic growth, equity and environmental sustainability. FAO should use to a greater extent its current tools and assets in social equity and inclusion, including the set of voluntary guidelines emanating from its Governing Bodies, which should be promoted at country level as an integral part of FAO's values and value added.**

**Conclusion 5. Translating the rich agenda of SDG 2 into practice requires clear entry points. SDG 2 requires transitioning from productivity-oriented agriculture to a sustainable and inclusive food systems approach. Despite some efforts, FAO's progress in shifting this mindset has been slow. Translating the rich agenda of SDG 2 into practice is challenging, as there may be a tendency to embrace too much complexity with the danger of dissipating capacity and funding across too wide a spectrum. Territorial approaches help address this 'complexity challenge' of the SDGs, because they tend to allow for local simplifications of the framework, less numerous partners, etc. More generally, approaches that use a clear, focused entry point (such as a region, or a specific law, or a particular social group) can help stakeholders address the complex ramifications of this single entry point in a number of SDGs or dimensions without verging into "analysis paralysis".**

178. FAO has a wide library of holistic approaches and is constantly developing new ones. This is a strength, yet this evaluation also expresses a cautionary note about the inherent complexity of systemic approaches, including the 2030 Agenda, and the potential difficulties in translating them into focused action at country level. The Food Systems approach, in which SDG 2 thinking is rooted, is still being developed. Its comprehensiveness lends itself to the same sort of tension between a complex theory and its practice, always simpler by necessity.
179. This being said, FAO has integrated the need to 'boil down' complex thinking into simple, actionable messages, at least in some of the reviewed areas of work such as agroecology

and its 10 Elements, which were described as a breakthrough. The 10 Elements helped to make progress in defining clear entry points. One has to start somewhere.

180. More generally, approaches that use a clear, focused entry point (such as a region, or a specific law, or a particular social group) can help stakeholders explore in their own experience the complex ramifications of this single entry point in a number of SDGs (or dimensions) including food security and nutrition, economic development, environmental sustainability, social inclusion and the likes without becoming too complex and unmanageable.
181. FAO has to become more practical, better at translating its global approaches, often complex, into simple words, at 'tailoring' them to local contexts in ways that make sense to local actors, and then at learning from the experience in a bottom up manner. The question ought *not* be "How to implement SDG 2 in locality X?" but rather "What in the SDGs resonates with local stakeholders, and speaks to their specific preoccupations and debates?"
182. FAO's good practices at country level tend to focus on increasing production and productivity (Target 2.3) to a greater extent than on sustainable food production (Target 2.4). Although at global level FAO has expressed its commitment to move towards a more sustainable food systems approach, its translation into concrete actions in the field has been progressing slowly. In general, FAO's support to food systems is often fragmented, targeting specific operations along agri-food chains.
  - **Recommendation 8. FAO should become better at tailoring its global approaches to local contexts. To do so, it needs to identify clear and focused entry points, preferably through existing national and local priorities, policies and programmes. This includes territorial approaches (e.g. "Landscape for Life", the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems) that focus on a specific geographic region. The optimal mix of interventions will depend on local circumstances and conditions and this emphasizes the importance of a full understanding of the local context to achieve the desired successful outcome at the least transaction cost.**
  - **Recommendation 9. Protecting and conserving biodiversity are key to preventing the spread of pathogens that can highly affect food and nutrition security, and FAO should expand its so far limited work in this area.**
  - **Recommendation 10. To accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems, more work could be done to help markets valorize sustainable agricultural practices and biodiversity, through certification schemes, social media campaigns, or even TV shows, cooks and gastronomic societies, etc.**

**Conclusion 6. Knowledge management in FAO does not support participatory and transversal learning.**

**The transition to sustainable development is knowledge-intensive and implies a change in the way knowledge is produced and shared; away from the top-down model towards a more participatory approach. This calls for modes of knowledge creation and exchange able to valorize the knowledge of local actors, including the technical knowledge of smallholders themselves, which needs to be respected and build upon. While FAO has spearheaded this evolution in some of its products (e.g. the farmer field schools), it remains a fragmented**

**organization when it comes to knowledge management. In the absence of formal tools, knowledge is shared 'organically' through networks of colleagues and partners that can easily form silos. This may explain a certain difficulty to learn from mistakes, to translate knowledge from one "cultural sphere" to the next, and to replicate successful and relevant initiatives.**

183. The transition to sustainable development is knowledge-intensive. Progress in terms of education and connectivity is leading to a change in the way knowledge is produced and shared, towards a more participatory model, and away from the top-down model. For instance, the COVID-19 epidemic has shown that intellectual leadership and expertise still matter; and that radical change is possible and even necessary going forward. But the epidemic also illustrated another trend: rapid, horizontal information sharing and co-creation of knowledge through collaboration is replacing ex-cathedra diffusion of a centrally-held body of knowledge as the dominant paradigm for knowledge management.
184. FAO has contributed to a number of participatory learning methodologies such as the farmer field schools, spearheaded by the Organization for nearly 30 years and currently integrated in a large number of other organizations' programmes. This evolution involves a more positive narrative on traditional practices and knowledge than was the case during the 'Green Revolution', however policymakers, researchers and extensionists tend to favour productivist and intensive approaches (mechanization, improved seeds, introduced animal breeding stock imported feed, fertilizer and the likes) that convey a gleaming image of modernity, often at the expense of traditional knowledge dismissed as atavism. Nevertheless, most if not all traditional farming systems are in reality rational, robust and based on valuable practical knowledge accumulated over the centuries and constantly updated. Ignoring this knowledge, and imposing "modern", capital-intensive food production techniques without taking into account local economic, agro-ecological and social realities has not worked in the past and will not work in the future.
185. The evolution towards co-creation of knowledge calls for close, trusted partnerships. It follows that FAO needs a robust programmatic footprint at country level, in support of national priorities, programmes and policies, as well as in regions, where much cross-sectoral and cross-country fertilization occurs. Without it, it would become little more than a group of far-away experts with only marginal relevance to its Members.
186. However, Phase 1 of this evaluation insisted on the paucity of tools for knowledge management in FAO. This diagnosis was confirmed by the second phase. The general picture remains one of a fragmented organization when it comes to knowledge management. In the absence of formal tools, knowledge is shared 'organically' through networks of colleagues and partners that can easily form silos, or even 'schools'. Moreover, lessons learned are often not documented. This may explain a certain difficulty for FAO to learn from mistakes and to translate knowledge from one "cultural sphere" to the next (e.g. from Latin America to Europe and Central Asia, or from Africa to the Near East) as observed in this evaluation. This could also explain why some successful relevant initiatives such as city-to-city cooperation are not widely replicated.
187. In terms of innovation and digital technologies, the most advanced areas were the ones that started the soonest: the Desert Locust Information System and the Global Information and Early Warning System. GIEWS has provided the empirical backbone for a lot of analytical work on food and nutrition security by FAO. Access and capacity to process satellite imagery is another long-time strength. Encouraging open access to such data is an area where the Organization has much potential, and is showing progress, as illustrated

by the Collect Earth platform and the Earth Map tool jointly developed with Google and FAO.

188. While FAO uses social media, it has not been the most active UN agency on Twitter and YouTube. Corporate support to digital tools development was consistently described by staff as more control-oriented than service-oriented.

➤ **Recommendation 11. An explicit, integrated knowledge management approach is required to help bridge cross-divisional divides, enhance interactions between staff based at headquarters, regional, subregional and country offices, and facilitate learning. A key element is to connect across countries and regions, and to build knowledge on what is already happening in the field. Having an explicit approach and standard tools to organize how such knowledge is acquired, transformed and packaged by groups at FAO (divisional, thematic, otherwise) could increase the effectiveness of transforming knowledge into focused policy recommendations and programmes. This is critical in a context where cost effectiveness is a major concern.**

➤ **Recommendation 12. Social media applications, digital innovations and information systems should be supported in a more service-oriented manner by corporate services.**

➤ **Recommendation 13. FAO information systems should be geared to support the analytical base of FAO and partners at the country level, where knowledge creation and sharing actually happen and can be impactful, rather than have all the information centralized and analysed at headquarters.**

**Conclusion 7. The new FAO Strategic Framework provides an opportunity to promote and communicate FAO's role in a more coherent and joined-up manner, aligned with the 2030 Agenda.**

**The current Strategic Framework structure and related Strategic Objectives have established a stronger strategic vision conceptually aligned with the 2030 Agenda. To some extent, the Strategic Programme Teams and the Regional Initiatives have helped move towards a more programmatic approach, and encouraged a more integrated, cross-disciplinary way of working. However, there is still a need for greater integration of the key principles of the 2030 Agenda, for knowledge exchange and collaboration between sectors and between regions, and for more robust and pragmatic means of implementation. The Strategic Framework is being revised and the new version is expected to address these issues.**

189. While joining up many lines of work, the Strategic Programmes have themselves become somewhat siloed and the extent to which they made a difference in the field remains unclear. One issue raised in the first phase was that the five Strategic Objectives tied FAO to a narrative that predated the SDGs. Phase 1 report argued that WFP, which revised its Strategic Framework after 2015, embarked on a faster transition to "SDG language" than FAO, and that adhering to one single reporting structure would generate resource and time savings.

190. Although the current Strategic Framework has established a strategic vision aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the key SDG principles such as "acting at scale" or "leave no one behind" have not been delineated and communicated within the Organization, which prevented the development of a common understanding on what they entail for FAO.

191. The FAO Strategic Framework is now being revised. The new Strategic Framework will be presented to the Governing Bodies in 2021 and is expected to articulate FAO's vision of a sustainable and food secure world for all in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The development of a new accountability framework is also envisaged, using SDG and other indicators (PC 128/2, 2020).
192. This is not to say that the SDGs are a perfect *language* for FAO to express its mandate and action. This evaluation did not look systematically into the possible imperfections and gaps of the agenda, but one that stands out after data collection is the low level of representation of the crisis response and resilience agenda, an area of work that is important for FAO.<sup>50</sup> In the sample of country case studies used in this report, many highlighted important work in resilience: Bangladesh (support to Rohingya refugees); Burkina Faso (*Caisses de Résilience*); Turkey (support to Syrian refugees). One global 'signature product', on management of transboundary plant pests and diseases had a strong bearing on credible risk reduction through solid, science-based preventive approaches, and touched upon the response to the present Desert Locust crisis. These cases indicate that FAO has much to offer when it approaches this agenda from a developmental perspective, i.e. a capacity development and resilience building angle.
193. The SDGs were meant to be inspirational, and they are a bit optimistic for it, hence a relative 'blind spot' on crises. However, there are mounting crises today with strong implications for food and nutrition security,<sup>51</sup> and this would probably be corrected if the SDG Agenda was drafted in 2020. This pleads for maintaining a set of *sui generis* objectives in the FAO Strategic Framework. This said, the work on resilience could also be linked to or communicated under Target 1.5.
194. The evaluation found that horizontal transfers of knowledge between disciplines and between regions remained hampered by structural and cultural (e.g. linguistic) factors. In addition to knowledge, other "means of implementation" in support of SDG 2 have not been fully explored or adopted by FAO, such as partnerships with different sectors and actors, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and procurement of additional technical and functional capacities to promote SDG 2 such as those related to legal support, policy analysis, social sciences, mobilization of partnerships and cross-sectoral collaboration.
- **Recommendation 14. FAO's Strategic Framework needs to be revised in favour of a lighter, streamlined and more nimble architecture speaking more directly to the SDGs. It should delineate the key principles of the 2030 Agenda as well as FAO's role in implementing them. The new Strategic Framework is also an opportunity to define a comprehensive accountability mechanism to hold senior management, divisional directors and FAO Representatives accountable for implementing the desired change, and to develop a harmonized, user-friendly, decentralized monitoring system covering both voluntary and assessed contributions.**

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<sup>50</sup> Mentioned in Target 1.5: By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.

<sup>51</sup> Preliminary assessments suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic may add between 83 and 132 million people to the total number of undernourished in the world in 2020, adding to the nearly 690 million people who are currently hungry (FAO *et al.*, 2020).

- **Recommendation 15. Acting at scale, promoting holistic approaches and leaving no one behind would require additional technical and functional capacities that are currently insufficient within FAO, such as lawyers, policy analysts, sociologists, operations managers, and experts with a strong field exposure.**

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# Appendix 1. Matrix of findings, conclusions and recommendations

Colors	Conclusions	Recommendation priority
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:red;"></span>	Not satisfactory	Immediate
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:orange;"></span>	Medium	Medium term
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:green;"></span>	Satisfactory	Long term

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

A. Is FAO positioning itself to offer relevant support to countries in achieving their SDG 2 targets?

C. How is FAO collaborating with others to support SDG 2?

B. To what extent is FAO transforming its delivery mechanisms and programmes (or should transform them) to better support countries in achieving SDG2 targets?

## FINDINGS

8. FAO contributed significantly to the design of SDG 2, rooted in the Food Systems approach, and more generally to the 2030 agenda.

1. About 91 percent of the FAO project portfolio addresses SDG 2 and its links with other SDGs, about 2/3rd of which focuses on food production (targets 2.3, 2.4, 2.5), and 1/3rd on food consumption (2.1 and 2.2).

2. Projects specifically dedicated to Target 2.5 on biodiversity are rare, but the theme was addressed to a degree in a quarter of the reviewed practices.

3. Many projects on the ground are of a small size, have not yet matured into visible good practices, and are often focused on food production.

40. UN reform and RBA collaboration are seen as opportunities to strengthen FAO's position and scale-up FAO approaches in countries.

26. FAO's complex governance structure allows for close engagement with Members but also reinforces compartmentalization.

29. The core of FAO's strength lies in its technical capacity on a wide range of relevant topics. However, this technical capacity has been eroded by budget cuts in many areas relevant to SDG 2.

30. Lesser capacities were reported in non-technical domains, such as in legal, policy, economic and social fields, and in knowledge management.

31. Insufficient operational capacity at country level has eroded demand for FAO's technical support and the relevance of the agency in the eyes of Members and donors.

32. Current project cycle management and controls lead to a fragmented portfolio with high transaction costs, insufficient strategic oversight and poor visibility of results.

33. FAO is perceived as close to Ministries of Agriculture. Less contact and collaborations were reported with other ministries, local government, and non-state actors.

21. The depth and breadth of partnerships in country is growing in some countries, often those with the best programmes.

22. Partnerships with the private sector remain insufficient to achieve an impact on food systems.

41. The UN reform demands greater decision-making power and financial autonomy for the FAO representations in country.

42. Currently, RBA collaboration is offset by competition and high transaction costs. While the three RBA's share a common agenda, they approach it from intrinsically different mandates.

5. In some of the reviewed interventions, FAO has been providing support for two decades.

6. Innovations have spread slowly from one region to another.

7. A trend is noticeable towards more holistic approaches, a broadening of scope and diversification of products.

9. Translating the rich agenda of SDG 2 into practice is challenging, with a risk of dissipating energy across too wide a spectrum.

12. Territorial approaches focusing on a specific region can help reduce complexity.

13. A good way to address linkages and trade-offs while avoiding "analysis paralysis" is to identify a relevant entry point and explore with local stakeholders the specific trade-offs involved.

10. Some areas of work have usefully 'boiled down' complex thinking into simple, actionable messages (e.g. 10 elements of agroecology).

11. The progress achieved in the transition towards more sustainable agriculture is limited to a small number of countries so far.

27. Existing integrative products are at a disadvantage in terms of finding a stable institutional home in the FAO sectorial structure.

28. Regional Offices and programmes play an important role to promote integrative solutions and approaches, but inter-regional exchanges appear limited.

18. FAO often relies on small pilot projects. However, a number of initiatives already acting at scale are highlighted in the report.

19. Some modes of intervention with potential to act at scale are: supporting national programmes and initiatives; legal and policy support; regional programmes; support to investment; support to education systems; climate finance; and SSTC.

20. Education of producers, traders and consumers is key in the transition to sustainable food systems, hence a need to leverage countries' education and extension systems.

4. The Farmer Field Schools and their derivations feature prominently among FAO good practices and have been widely adopted by other actors.

34. Horizontal information sharing and co-creation of knowledge are replacing the top-down diffusion of a centrally-held body of knowledge.

35. In the absence of formal tools for knowledge management, knowledge is shared 'organically' through networks of colleagues and partners, which can easily form silos.

36. The Organization has tended to provide technical assistance in a top-down manner, not facilitating horizontal transfers of knowledge and often failing to build upon field experience.

37. The evaluation identified a difficulty for FAO to translate knowledge from one "cultural sphere" to the next, which could be due to linguistic and other cultural differences.

14. "Leave no one behind" is yet to be mainstreamed in FAO. Interesting social inclusion initiatives remain "islands of success" promoted by individuals.

15. FAO's work towards targets 2.1 and 2.2 (zero hunger and malnutrition) is more socially inclusive than its work towards targets 2.3 and 2.4 on food production.

23. The most advanced areas in terms of innovation and digital technologies are GIEWS, the DLIS, as well as access to satellite imagery.

24. FAO is improving its provision of rich developmental data in open access and the development of telephone applications.

25. FAO has started to use social media to reach a wider audience and support a large-scale transformation of agriculture.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. FAO is well positioned at the global level and is committed to support the SDGs. Progress has been made on communicating FAO's role both internally and externally. FAO has engaged with the current UN reform – strongly connected to the SDGs – with a very collaborative attitude.

2. At the national level, FAO's position is weaker, due to a limited programmatic footprint. Administrative delays have eroded FAO's reputation, demand for its technical support, and relevance at the country level.

3. Although many of the reviewed initiatives were small, FAO is acting at scale when it supports national programmes, legal and policy initiatives, regional programmes, investment in food systems, climate finance, UN collaboration, SSTC, and education. Partnerships and mobilization of domestic resources remain insufficient to act at scale.

4. The principle "to leave no one behind" applies universally and is fundamental to FAO's value added. It is yet to be systematically mainstreamed into FAO's programmes and knowledge products. Progress was recorded on gender equality but not for other groups.

5. Translating the rich agenda of SDG 2 into practice is challenging, as there is a tendency to embrace too much complexity. Approaches that use a clear, focused entry point (such as a region, a specific law, or a particular social group) can help stakeholders address the complex ramifications of this single-entry point in a number of dimensions without verging into "analysis paralysis".

6. Knowledge management in FAO does not support participatory and transversal learning. Yet the transition to sustainable development is knowledge-intensive and calls for new modes of knowledge creation and exchange, able to valorize the knowledge of local actors, including smallholders.

7. The new FAO's Strategic Framework provides an opportunity to promote and communicate FAO's role in a coherent and joined-up manner, aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Weak operational capacity in FAO COs represents a strategic liability that needs strengthening over the long-term.

2. Strengthen operational skills and programmatic tools, including through a more programmatic approach, to mobilize more voluntary contributions, spend them well, and give some visibility to the results.

3. Closer links to the private sector, producer and consumer organizations, education and research institutions and philanthropic organizations are needed to act at scale.

4. Beyond advocating for greater resource allocation to food systems, there is need to improve policy, legal and educational environments, and to strengthen the institutional capacity of line ministries to use their resources effectively.

5. Mainstream "leave no one behind" into FAO programmes, Strategic Framework, communication and knowledge products.

6. Develop strategies to provide employment to the youth, who aspire for environmental sustainability, fairer markets and modernization.

7. Stronger policy engagement to address the trade-offs between the economy, social inclusion and the environment, and to promote FAO's set of voluntary guidelines at country level as an integral part of its value addition.

8. FAO must better tailor its global approaches to local contexts, and identify focused entry points, preferably through existing national and local priorities, policies and programmes.

9. FAO should expand its work in biodiversity.

10. To accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems, use markets to valorise sustainable agricultural practices and products, through bio-certification schemes, etc.

11. An integrated knowledge management approach to enhance interactions between HQ and DOs, connect across countries and regions, and facilitate learning from the field.

12. Digital innovations and information systems should be supported in a more service-oriented manner by corporate services.

13. Gear all information systems to support the analytical base at the country level.

14. Align the Strategic Framework to the SDGs, delineate key principles of the 2030 Agenda and FAO's role in their implementation, and define a harmonized monitoring system covering both voluntary and assessed contributions.

15. Hire more lawyers, policy analysts, sociologists, operations managers & technical experts with strong field exposure to fill functional capacity gaps.

## Appendix 2. Overview of signature product reviews

To explore the implementation of FAO's programmes at regional and country levels, the evaluation conducted a series of case studies of FAO methodologies, approaches, mechanisms and services with potential to accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG 2 ("signature products"). These signature products (SPs) were purposefully selected based on evaluative evidence, and proposed in the evaluation report of the first phase of the SDG 2 evaluation (FAO, 2020). The core evaluation team conducted these case studies with the valuable support of the respective divisions and departments.

The table below provides a summary of the results for each SP.

**Table 5: Overview of Signature Product Reviews**

#	Signature product and targets	Scope and examples explored	Relevance to SDG 2	Act at scale	Holistic approaches and interconnections	Leave no one behind	Innovation	Address shocks and stresses	Main challenges within/for FAO to expand this SP
1	<b>Legal and parliamentary work on FNS</b>  <i>Targets 2.1 and 2.2. Some school feeding laws also contribute to targets 2.3, 2.4 and 12.7.</i>	Right to Food, legislation on school feeding programmes, and legislative approaches on healthy diets.	Promotes changes in the political agenda and contributes to bills and laws on FNS.	Contributes to political changes and to the creation of legal instruments that benefit many people.	Creates alliances with a variety of stakeholders. FNS laws are multisectoral and foresee multi-stakeholders' mechanisms.	Embraces human rights-based approaches and have <i>erga omnes</i> effect.	Laws promote innovation. Parliamentary Fronts against Hunger and multi-stakeholder mechanisms as innovative instruments.	Governments required to comply with laws. Legal frameworks for addressing emergencies.	i) strict relationship with MoA; ii) deal with political actors while keeping neutrality; and iii) inadequate capacities and structures.
2	<b>Nutrition education</b> <i>Targets 2.1 and 2.2. It also involved target 4.7.</i>	School-based nutrition education, links between agriculture and nutrition education, ENACT and food-based dietary guidelines.	Key causal factors of nutrition imbalances are inadequate diets related to access to food and to nutrition knowledge.	Promoting integration of nutrition education into legal/policy work. However, it requires political will. There are some successful examples such as school feeding programmes in Latin America.	Nutrition education is implemented in coordination with different sectors.	It starts with a comprehensive needs assessment and formative researches to understand the roles of children, women, men, beliefs, social norms, food distribution, food	Psychological approaches to promote behaviour changes and to monitor progress in the improvement of dietary practices in schools was innovative.	N/A	i) although crosscutting, nutrition receives inadequate resources and has low visibility within FAO; ii) experiences are often small pilots, and scaling up requires legislative and governmental advocacy (FAO has low capacities); and iii) new

#	Signature product and targets	Scope and examples explored	Relevance to SDG 2	Act at scale	Holistic approaches and interconnections	Leave no one behind	Innovation	Address shocks and stresses	Main challenges within/for FAO to expand this SP
						production patterns, etc.			approach to nutrition education based on needs assessment/formative research not well understood inside FAO.
3	<b>Support to value chain development</b>  <i>Targets 2.3, 2.4 and 2.a. It contributes to SDG1, SDG5, SDG10 and SDG12.</i>	FAO experiences with developing value chains in projects in Africa.	Contributes to inclusive food systems, meets demand in various contexts. Catalyses resources.	Can influence national economies, and promote urban-rural linkages.	Bring many sectors and stakeholders together to meet consumers and markets' demand.	Involves and empowers some vulnerable groups but there are some trade-offs (affect groups).	Entry point for innovation in terms of mechanization and digital technology.	Local supply and commercial ecosystem that reduces dependency on food imports.	i) low private sector engagement; ii) lack of national support to VC transition, and iii) some marginalized groups not well mainstreamed into FAO's support to VC.
4	<b>Support to secure tenure of natural resources through VGGT and SSF</b>  <i>Target 1.4. . It contributes to SDG 2 targets 2.1, 2.3, 2.4 and to SDG10.</i>	Two guidelines with an emphasis on vulnerable and marginalized people; i.e. VGGT and SSF	Promotes access to resources.	It can create political commitment, but requires political will to be implemented. There are positive examples; e.g. Sierra Leone.	Done through multiple sectors and stakeholders at national and regional levels.	Direct link between vulnerable people and resources.	Software to demarcate land and satellite imaging to map illegal buildings that are unregistered.	It can contribute to building resilience of landless people.	i) institutional uncertainty; ii) Less interest in implementing these guidelines; iii) visibility of small-scale fisheries within FAO; iv) changes in governments and political parties; and v) lack of national capacities.
5	<b>Farmer field schools and their derivatives</b>  <i>Target 4.7. It contributes to all SDG 2 targets.</i>	FFS history, evolution and methodology.	Develop producers' skills and knowledge towards a more efficient and sustainable production.	It is a public good but scaling it up requires stakeholders buy-in. There are positive examples of institutionalization of FFS such as Angola.	Platform for holistic learning. Balance between the three pillars of sustainability.	Empower farmers, and integrates women and youth. However, there are trade-offs (affect groups).	Benefit from internet connectivity and smart phones. Approach was an innovation in the past.	Build farmer's resilience to shocks and stresses.	i) time and cost; ii) monitoring for quality assurance; iii) too focused on production; iv) financial sustainability; v) not always inclusive nor aligned participatory approach.

#	Signature product and targets	Scope and examples explored	Relevance to SDG 2	Act at scale	Holistic approaches and interconnections	Leave no one behind	Innovation	Address shocks and stresses	Main challenges within/for FAO to expand this SP
6	<b>Management of transboundary plant diseases and pests</b>  <i>Targets 2.1, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.b. It affect target 12.4.</i>	Preventive control with some cursory references to large emergency outbreak control operations.	Collaborative and competent architecture to offer mutual help to combating pests and diseases.	Global scale.	Frequently leverages regional programmes and collaborative arrangements.	Contribute to reduce inequalities amongst countries.	Progress on the use of remote sensing, drones and digital technologies.	Long practice and experience in preventive control measures.	i) insufficient resources; ii) staff turnover; iii) lack of trust among members; iv) insecurity and terrorism; v) arrears from some Members; iv) little/no data on incidence and impact.
7	<b>Agroecology, traditional knowledge, in-situ biodiversity Conservation</b>  <i>Targets 2.4 and 2.5. It contributes to target 2.1 and several SDGs.</i>	10 Elements of Agroecology focused on examples from Africa, Asia and Latin America.	Contributes to the design and management of food and agricultural systems.	Its promotion is recent. Potential to scale up only if there is political will and commitment.	Seeks to transform food and agricultural systems by providing holistic and long-term solutions.	People to become their own agents of change. Potential to attract women, youth and indigenous peoples.	Co-creation of knowledge based on social and environmental values. Circular economy.	Improve food systems resilience. Useful tool against market shocks.	i) FAO's narrow focus on production and innovation; and ii) not seen by many governments as a solution to production/productivity problems.
8	<b>Protection and fair share of genetic resources for food and Agriculture</b>  <i>Target 2.5. It contributes to targets 2.1 and 2.4, and SDG 1, SDG5, SDG13 and SDG15.</i>	Linkage between the global policy work on Genetic Resources and related actions at national level.	Can accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG 2.	Potential if there is political will and commitment to institutionalize the Genetic Resource agenda.	PGRFA mainstreamed into national planning in a cross-cutting manner.	One of the few options to secure livelihoods of vulnerable farmers. There are contributions of indigenous communities.	Innovative digitalization solutions provide opportunities for GRFA and should be explored	In addition to building resilience of vulnerable groups, it helps to prevent crises.	i) limited exchange of experiences; ii) political sensitivity of the topic; and iii) technical and institutional support for enhancing national capacities and frameworks on GRFA is too bureaucratic.
9	<b>South-south and triangular cooperation</b>  <i>Targets 17.3, 17.6 and 17.9. It contributes to all SDG 2 targets.</i>	SSTC as a means to accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG 2.	Contributes to identifying and exchanging SDG 2-related development solutions. Brings new partners to fund SDG 2.	Catalytic effect in terms of attracting partners and resources. Capacity to create political commitment.	Multi-stakeholder approach is a key operational principle.	Equality is a key normative principle. Beneficiaries become providers. SSTC initiatives tend to include vulnerable groups.	Identify innovative solutions for development that can be replicated or adapted to various contexts.	Conveys solutions to prevent and mitigate crisis and emergencies. Process to respond to emergencies can be slow.	i) inadequate visibility of SSTC within FAO; ii) lack of a common understanding on its definitions; iii) high turnover and ambiguity on the role of SSTC team; and iv) scarce resources from the regular programme to

#	Signature product and targets	Scope and examples explored	Relevance to SDG 2	Act at scale	Holistic approaches and interconnections	Leave no one behind	Innovation	Address shocks and stresses	Main challenges within/for FAO to expand this SP
									strengthen the mechanism.
10	<p><b>Support to agricultural investment</b></p> <p><i>Target 2.a and SDG17. It contributes to all SDG 2 targets</i></p>	FAO Investment Centre's role in promoting agricultural investment in Africa.	Contributes to funding SDG 2.	Catalyses resources to fill the investment gap to achieve SDG 2.	Guided by environmental and social safeguards. Involves multiple stakeholders, in particular resource partners.	Contribute to making agricultural investment more inclusive.	Brought to IDDRSI investments a suite of innovation and good practices.	Contribute to mobilizing investments for resilience building, and for response to shocks.	i) lack of specialized capacity among the IFIs makes.
11	<p><b>Support to fair and informed commodity markets and international trade in agriculture</b></p> <p><i>Targets 2.a and 2.b. It also contributes to all SDG 2 targets.</i></p>	Commodity markets and international trade as a means to accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDG 2.	Trade-in food and agricultural products increases the availability of food.	Although it provides public goods, scaling it up requires stakeholders buy-in.	Requires coordination across sectors to ensure linkages between trade and agriculture and/or FNS.	Potential to integrate small holders and family farmers into markets and value chains on terms favourable to them.	N/A	Contributes to reducing volatility of commodity prices.	i) Inadequate expertise; ii) low visibility and insufficient links with ministries in charge of trade policy; iii) diminished relevance of the CCP and IGGs; and iv) limited attention to the fairness aspects of agricultural trade.
12	<p><b>Rural women's empowerment</b></p> <p><i>Targets 2.1 and 2.3. It also contributes to SDG1 and SDG5.</i></p>	FAO has various approaches to rural women empowerment: but three practices were reviewed: Dimitra clubs, gender-sensitive value chains and JP RWEE.	Dimitra reinforces social cohesion and contributes to gender equality. Gender-sensitive VC contributes women's financial independence. RWEE contributes to increasing women's incomes and FNS.	These practices can be successfully replicated by FAO and stakeholders as well as foster political commitment.	Requires coordination with various governmental actors at national, sub-national and local levels. Partnerships forged with implementing partners.	Potential to address inequalities within rural populations.	Benefits from labour-saving technologies, digital solutions and financial literacy.	Contributes to building resilience of women and households.	i) FAO to fully take on board gender mainstreaming; ii) limited capacity in gender analysis and gender mainstreaming; and iii) inclusion of youth, people with disability and migrants generally weak and unstructured.

#	Signature product and targets	Scope and examples explored	Relevance to SDG 2	Act at scale	Holistic approaches and interconnections	Leave no one behind	Innovation	Address shocks and stresses	Main challenges within/for FAO to expand this SP
13	<b>Urban Food Agenda</b>  <i>Targets 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4. It also contributes to SDG11</i>	Promotion of integrated food system planning and multi-stakeholder mechanisms, exchange of best practices, and urban and peri-urban agriculture/horticulture.	Territorial approach to SDG 2. Improve food system chain.	Can influence local and even national policies.	Involves multi-sectorial plans and actions. Promotes connections between public and private sectors, and the civil society. There are trade-offs (complexity).	Potential to address inequalities within urban population and vulnerable groups.	Innovative approaches towards urban food. Use of geospatial data. App to monitor fresh food markets.	Address the rupture of distribution chains.	i) urban food agenda is fragmented; ii) donor-driven approach does not allow for adaptation of interventions to various contexts; iii) inadequate capacities and mechanisms; and iv) poor engagement with the private sector and consumer's organizations.
14	<b>Aquaculture promotion and Blue Growth</b>  <i>Targets 2.3 and 2.4. It contributes to SDG1, SDG8 and, SDG12 and 14.</i>	Foundations for Blue Growth Economy, existing aquaculture sectors, introduction and/or transition to new aquaculture sectors.	Contributes to employment generation, food security and poverty eradication.	Creates high-level political commitment, in particular BG.	BG involves various sectors and links food production and consumption. Both promote the three pillars of sustainability and interactions between local and national actors.	Target marginalized groups such as small-scale fishers, women and youth. However, there are trade-offs (affect groups).	Paradigm shift to a blue economy is innovative. Technology apps and GPS being used in aquaculture.	BG can lead to less dependency on imports. Aquaculture can promote preparedness, response and recovery.	i) learning from successful interventions; ii) custodianship of knowhow and infrastructure; iii) communal vs. commercial aquaculture; iv) narrow third party perspective of FAO capabilities.

## Appendix 3. Summary of country case studies

Within the scope of the wider SDG 2 evaluation, 17 country case studies were purposefully sampled with a focus on best practices. Their selection involved a thorough documentary review, in-depth interviews with FAO personnel, an exhaustive analysis of the FAO portfolio, and consultation with FAO regional offices.

To overcome the limitations imposed on the evaluation team by COVID-19, national consultants were recruited to conduct this work. Specifically, the CCS aimed to: i) identify practices that may be relevant to document, scale-up and/or replicate; ii) explore opportunities, challenges and limitations to advance FAO's work in support of SDG 2 at country level; and iii) find opportunities for strengthening FAO's partnerships and collaboration in support of SDG 2.

The table below presents 15<sup>52</sup> of the case studies that were conducted.

**Table 6: Summary of Country Case Studies**

Country	Practice explored	Description
<b>Africa</b>		
Angola	<b><i>Institutionalization of the farmer field schools approach in national extension</i></b> <i>Targets 2.2, 2.3, 2.4</i>	In what is the most visible, developed and successful practice introduced by FAO in Angola to date, farmer field schools and agro-pastoral farmer field schools were tested and adapted to the context of Angola. 2,700 field schools have been installed so far, covering 8 provinces in the country and targeting more than 81,000 people to date (50% women). The Government and donors have expressed strong commitment to institutionalize this practice.
	<b><i>Territorial development for secured land rights and natural resources management</i></b> <i>Targets 2.3, 2.4</i>	A territorial development pilot with potential for coordinated territorial planning and as a dialogue tool for conflict resolution in the communities (e.g. land delimitation or collective management of grassland). Its replication is made difficult due to the complex methodology, time and resources required for its correct implementation.
	<b><i>Valorization of traditional veterinary knowledge</i></b> <i>Targets 2.4, 2.5</i>	Pilot project that identified traditional knowledge of the local communities about the most common cattle pests and diseases and about how to treat these through native plants, and trained veterinarians and paravets on the result.
Burkina Faso	<b><i>Caisses de Résilience</i></b> <i>Targets 1.5, 2.4</i>	Integrated community development approach combining a farmer field school, a village saving scheme and a social discussion group, introduced in 2016 by FAO and now replicated by a few partners, with benefits such as improved social cohesion, better yields, better soil and water conservation, adoption of climate-resilient production practices, and mobilization of community savings.
	<b><i>Baobab and moringa gardens and nutritional education</i></b> <i>Targets 2.2, 2.5</i>	From 2010 onward FAO promoted a traditional practice of growing baobab and moringa in backyard gardens for their nutritious and health virtues. The practice has been widely disseminated in the country, with the help of various government ministries, the private sector and NGO's, resulting in increased product supply and demand of baobab and moringa leaves on the national market, and consequent improvements in nutrition. A module on nutrition-sensitive agriculture was also developed and delivered in a number of vocational schools in the rural sector.
Cabo Verde	<b><i>Pioneering the Blue Economy</i></b> <i>Targets 2.A, 2.3</i>	A GEF project (2015-2020) supported advocacy and strategy for developing ocean and coastal resources. A National Investment Plan for the Blue Economy and other related strategies are now in place. More than 60 projects submitted by municipalities (yet to be funded).
	<b><i>Governance of Food and Nutrition Security</i></b> <i>Targets 2.1, 2.2</i>	From 2010 to date, FAO has supported Cabo Verde in the development of key governance instruments in the area of Food and Nutritional Security, including the National Council and National Secretariat for FNS; a law on the Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition; and a law for the national funding of the School Feeding and Health Programme.
Rwanda	<b><i>Support to Intensification in Sustainable Agriculture</i></b>	The Sustainable Agricultural Intensification Project (SAIP) is a large GAFSP-funded project implemented in eight districts with some 38,000 farmers, to which FAO provides technical assistance on FFS, farming as business and small-scale irrigation technologies.

<sup>52</sup> Two of the country case studies could not be finalized in time for analysis.

Country	Practice explored	Description
	<i>Target 2.3</i>	
	<b>Integrated value chain approach to agriculture</b> <i>Target 2.3</i>	Several small projects aiming to move Rwandan agriculture from subsistence to a market-led sector through value chains. Results seem limited, apart from slight improvements in nutrition and yields. The country's demographics, land use and topography constrain the possibilities for market orientation.
	<b>Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE)</b> <i>SDG 1, target 2.4</i>	A successful multifaceted project where various UN agencies take part (kitchen gardens through FFS for FAO). Demonstrated increase in vegetable availability and use, livestock production, improved incomes, diet and nutrition.
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>		
Bangladesh	<b>Addressing refugees' and hosts' cooking fuel needs in Cox's Bazar</b> <i>Targets .2.1, 2.2, 7.1, 10.7, SDG 15</i>	Since 2017, FAO has supported the diffusion of stoves not relying on firewood and homestead gardening among Rohingya and host communities in the Cox Bazar region. This has led to the mitigation of deforestation around camps, as well as supported community nurseries for reforestation. Capacity for farming and fishing has also been ameliorated.
	<b>Improving food security in Southern Coastal Regions</b> <i>Targets 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4</i>	From 2012 to date, FAO has supported backyard poultry farming, homestead gardening, rearing of livestock and aquaculture in some of the country's poorest districts through several projects. Good focus on value addition through farmer organizations.
Fiji	<b>Support to the rice value chain</b> <i>Targets 2.3, 2.4</i>	Classic support to rice growing and value chain development through farmer field schools. High-yielding rice varieties, input subsidies and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices have been promoted.
	<b>Cyclone response and resilience to Climate Change</b> <i>Targets 2.3, 2.4</i>	Several projects for the recovery of agricultural livelihoods post-cyclones from 2013 onward; have matured into disaster preparedness and resilience "to structurally and sustainably reduce food nutrition insecurity derived from the negative impact of climate change".
	<b>Promotion of Blue Growth</b> <i>Targets 2.3, 2.4, SDG 14</i>	From 2015 to present, promotion of capacity building at the community level, organizing the fisher communities into fisher organizations, rolling out simple fish aggregating devices; and Fiji signing onto relevant instruments that will contribute to sustainably protect and manage fisheries resource.
Philippines	<b>FFS for Integrated Pest Management</b> <i>Targets 2.3, 2.4, 2.5</i>	Since 1993, the FFS strategy has been used in the Philippine National Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programme, aiming to make IPM the standard approach to pest management in the Philippines, with a clear territorial focus (barangays) and a recent focus on the resilience of production systems.
	<b>Supply chain consolidation and marketing linkages (Farmer Business School)</b> <i>Target 2.3</i>	Similar to an FFS but more focused on value chains. Learning takes place at the village level adopting the "learning by doing" approach. Access to new markets have significantly increased the participants' incomes (mostly women), but there is room for improvement in documentation and learning.
Nepal	<b>Nutrition sensitive FFS</b> <i>Targets 2.1, 2.2</i>	Nutrition-sensitive farmer field schools (N-FFS) for empowering farmer groups on sustainable agricultural practices, with health and sanitation-related components. The practice evolved as a comprehensive package of food production, utilization (food safety analysis, recipe preparation, food preservation, a quantity of food intake and processing), and storage.
	<b>Climate-resilient approaches to food security</b> <i>Targets 1.5, 2.4</i>	Demonstration of a new approach of combing disaster preparedness and adaptation, including disasters and climate risk assessments at municipality level, early warning systems in agriculture (insect pest), crop modelling, yield forecasting systems and development of agro-advisory bulletins (2008-2012).
<b>Europe and Central Asia</b>		
Georgia	<b>Data management for evidence-based policy making in agriculture</b> <i>Target 2.a</i>	A set of digital tools to provide the evidence base for policy formulation and implementation in the Ministry of Agriculture and help transform the current advisory system into a needs-based extension service system.
	<b>Agricultural Investment Matching Grants</b> <i>Target 2.a</i>	An approach tested since 2018 to extend financial support for better access to improved agricultural equipment and technologies, coupled with training for women and men farmers and small-and-medium-sized agribusinesses (SMEs). A web-based platform that allows electronic submission and processing of the applications was also created to support management of the scheme.

Country	Practice explored	Description
	<b>Integrated demonstration plots</b> <i>Targets 2.a, 2.3</i>	From 2016 onward. FAO supports extension services in Georgia by organizing demonstration plots and practical trainings for farmer field schools (FFS), Information- Consulting Centres of the MEPA and interns from the Agrarian University.
Turkey	<b>Improving refugees' employability</b> <i>Targets 2.3, 10.7</i>	Implemented since 2019, the programme is complementary to a set of refugee projects, and provides vocational, language and technical training to Syrian refugees. A job fair was also organized.
	<b>Blue Hope Initiative</b> <i>Targets 2.a, 2.3</i>	Development of a holistic framework to support fisheries, aquaculture, tourism and related sectors in a way that maximizes social and economic benefits, while minimizing environmental degradation.
	<b>Adaptation to Climate Change in steppe ecosystems</b> <i>Targets 2.a, 2.4</i>	Mapping of steppe ecosystems, the identification of vulnerable zones, the promotion of conservation agriculture, and the introduction of an EBA approach in pilot districts (2015-2018). Steppe ecosystems are the least represented in Turkey agricultural policy.
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>		
Colombia	<b>Public procurement for family agriculture</b> <i>Targets 2.3, 2.4</i>	Creation of the National Technical Board of Public Procurement, with local purchases of Pesos 25.67 million (2016-2020). Public food procurements can help reactivate the economy, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
	<b>Healthy and Sustainable Schools</b> <i>Target 2.2</i>	Implementation of six school gardens as learning spaces for healthy and sustainable eating, facilitating the adoption of the EAASS component focused on the development of school gardens to combat overweight.
Costa Rica	<b>Support to Family Farming</b> <i>All SDG 2 targets</i>	FAO has long supported Family Farming in the country, mainly through studies, workshops and other technical assistance (2010 to present).
	<b>Support to Food and Nutrition Security policy</b> <i>Targets 2.1, 2.2, 2.4</i>	Since 2012, FAO has supported school gardens, school canteens, nutrition education, and the design of many policies, e.g. the Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Eradication of Hunger by 2025, with an evolution from the traditional support to agriculture to addressing the consumption and nutrition dimensions.
Ecuador	<b>Comprehensive policy support to end hunger and malnutrition</b> <i>All SDG 2 targets</i>	Policy effort to achieve food security and improve nutrition by promoting sustainable agriculture through organic laws and national government programmes, coordinated with multiple institutions from the national government, academia, the private sector, civil society, nongovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies.
	<b>Development of sustainable producer organizations</b> <i>All SDG 2 targets</i>	FAO in the province of Napo has worked with associations of producers that have helped homogenize quality standards for banana, cocoa and coffee production and consolidate volumes for commercialization of products for local and international markets.
	<b>Addressing the effects of COVID-19 on FNS</b> <i>All SDG 2 targets</i>	In the face of the health emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic, the food sector is considered strategic and FAO is helping prioritize activities to minimize the impact on national food systems.
<b>Near East and North Africa</b>		
Morocco	<b>Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (SIPAM)</b> <i>Targets 2.3, 2.4, 2.5</i>	From 2010 to present, FAO and the Government are working to support the economy of remote mountain and oasis communities and maintain biodiversity through the creation of food processing, cosmetics and handicraft cooperatives and the bio-certification of local products, which can lead to a rapid improvement in incomes. Several independent projects applying the same approach (SIPAMs) have been replicated in Morocco.
	<b>Generalizing access to drinking water and sanitation in rural areas</b> <i>SDG 6, target 2.3</i>	An unusual project implemented from 1997 to present, in which FAO works with the national water authority to support rural areas through a <i>sui generis</i> participatory methodology and training for water agents. The national authority has increased access to quality drinking water and sanitation in rural areas from 43% in 2000 to 97% in 2018, thus saving time searching for water, improving health and hygiene, and helping feed livestock and grow vegetables.
	<b>Morocco South-South Cooperation (SSC) with Africa</b> <i>Targets 2.a, 17.6</i>	Since 1999 Morocco has been supporting SSC with other Africa countries through FAO, as well as through other channels, reportedly paving the way for Morocco to apply for membership in ECOWAS. Over the years, Moroccan experts and technicians have been dispatched to Burkina Faso, Niger, Djibouti and other countries. Impacts are poorly documented.
Sudan	<b>Food security information systems</b> <i>All SDG 2 targets</i>	Information and early warning system on FNS and related policy support since 2013 in six vulnerable states of Sudan.
	<b>VGGTs in Darfur</b> <i>Targets 2.1, 2.3</i>	Recently started project promoting legitimate land tenure governance using the VGGT in the context of conflict-displaced communities and IDPs in the Darfur Region.

Country	Practice explored	Description
	<p><b><i>Upgrading the Sudanese sesame seeds value chain</i></b>  <i>Target 2.3</i></p>	<p>FAO is working with the University of Khartoum to improve the safety and quality of sesame seeds produced in the country to facilitate access to high-end markets such as Japan, Korea and the EU, thereby increasing the revenue of stakeholders, particularly small farmers</p>

## **Annexes**

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb1581en/cb1581en.pdf>

Annex 2. List of people interviewed

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb1816en/cb1816en.pdf>

Annex 3. List of documents consulted

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb1817en/cb1817en.pdf>

Annex 4. Results from the survey of FAO personnel

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb1582en/cb1582en.pdf>

Annex 5. Study on FAO's role in the design of the SDGs

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb1923en/cb1923en.pdf>

Annex 6. Portfolio analysis

Annex 7. Detailed Theory of Change: synergies and trade-offs within SDG2 and other goals

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb1924en/cb1924en.pdf>

Annex 8. Concept Note for the conduct of Country Case Studies

Annex 9. Concept Note for the conduct of Signature Products reviews

Annex 10. Systematic review of country and project evaluations conducted by OED since 2014

Annex 11. Signature Product Reviews

Annex 12. Country Case Studies

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