

Country Programme Evaluation Series

Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Republic of Moldova

2016–2019

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms	iii
1. Introduction	1
2. Purpose of the evaluation	2
3. Overview of Moldova’s development trends	3
4. FAO in Moldova	4
4.1 Overview of FAO’s field programme	4
4.2 FAO’s Country Programming Framework	4
5. Scope of the evaluation	5
6. Objectives	6
7. Evaluation questions	7
7.1 Strategic positioning and relevance	7
7.1.1 Normative values	7
7.1.2 Partnership and coordination	7
7.1.3 Comparative advantage	7
7.2 Programme contribution: Are we making a difference?	7
7.2.1 Relevance	7
7.2.2 Effectiveness and contributions to results.....	8
7.2.3 Sustainability of results.....	8
7.2.4 Coherence and synergies.....	8
7.2.5 Cross-cutting issues	8
8. Methodology	9
9. Process	10
9.1 Review of secondary data.....	10
9.2 Primary data collection: interviews of FAO stakeholders, counterparts and partners.....	10
9.3 Main evaluation steps	11
9.4 Drafting and dissemination of the report, follow up of findings, conclusions and recommendations	11
10. Organization of the evaluation	13
10.1 Roles and responsibilities	13
10.2 Composition and profile of the evaluation team	13
10.3 Evaluation timeline.....	14

Abbreviations and acronyms

CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CPF	Country Programming Framework
OED	Office of Evaluation
REU	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

1. Introduction

1. The Office of Evaluation (OED) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) carries out Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs) to provide accountability to Member countries, national governments and development partners, and draw lessons and suggestions for programme improvement. Moldova was selected as one of the countries in which to carry out a CPE in 2021.
2. The terms of reference (TOR) for this evaluation were developed based on a desk review of existing external documentation and preliminary analysis of FAO's portfolio of work in Moldova. The TORs also benefited from discussions held during the preparatory phase with a selected number of FAO personnel at headquarters level. The evaluation will cover the past four years of the programme cycle from 2016 to 2019. The team will further develop the methodology and evaluation tools throughout the exercise.

2. Purpose of the evaluation

3. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the results of FAO's programme in Moldova and provide feedback to better orient FAO's programme with a view to make future Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) more impactful and relevant to the needs of the country. The main audience for the evaluation, to which most of the lessons and recommendations will be addressed, are the FAO Representative, country office personnel, and the Government of Moldova. Other important users of the evaluation are personnel in the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) and other FAO units, including divisions at headquarters and other country offices that will benefit and build on lessons learned and good practices. Further users of the evaluation will be FAO's partners within the broader development community, including resource partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), implementing partners and other United Nations (UN) agencies, in particular those with whom strategic interventions were identified in the context of the UN Development Cooperation Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Although not a target group for the evaluation report itself, the evaluation also aspires to provide accountability with respect to communities and in particular vulnerable groups in Moldova that FAO has sought to assist.

3. Overview of Moldova's development trends

4. According to the World Bank's data, Moldova is a lower-middle income country with an average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita estimated at USD 3 395 in 2020. The economy has expanded by an average of 4.6 percent annually in the past 20 years, driven by consumption and fuelled by remittances. The latter account for 10 percent of GDP.¹ The current 'Human Development Index' score is 0.711 (ranked 107th among all countries).² The agriculture and food processing sector accounts for 10 percent of GDP.³
5. Arable land accounts for around 74 percent of Moldova's total land area, equal to 3 384.6 thousand hectares, one of the highest percentages in Europe.⁴ Even though half of the Moldovan population lives in rural areas, the rural employment rate is only 39 percent. Income from agricultural activities is low compared to other sectors of the economy.
6. Household income from agricultural activities has decreased over the years and represents up to 45 percent in farmers and 50 to 60 percent for the employers in agriculture. Agricultural wages were around 60 percent of the national average in 2014–2015. Low wages and a limited number of jobs have created stable patterns of poverty in rural areas. Nonetheless, agriculture activities contribute up to 20 percent of the revenue of the rural area inhabitancies.
7. The importance of the agriculture and food processing industry as the main contributor to the Republic of Moldova's GDP is highlighted in the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2014–2020, adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment and approved by Government Decision No. 409 from 4 June 2014.⁵

¹ World Bank. 2020. [Country Context Moldova](#).

² UNDP. 2020. [Human Development Indicators, Moldova](#).

³ Agriculture, forestry and fishing, value added (% of GDP), the World Bank, 2018. [Country profile](#) Moldova, 2018.

⁴ FAO. 2020. Family Farming Knowledge Platform, [Republic of Moldova](#).

⁵ FAO. 2020. [Smallholders and family farms in the Republic of Moldova](#), Budapest, FAO, pp. 58, 62, 77.

4. FAO in Moldova

4.1 Overview of FAO's field programme

8. The FAO project portfolio in Moldova during the period 2016–2019 included a total of 31 projects, out of which 20 were national, two interregional, seven regional and two sub-regional. The total budget of national projects during the evaluation period amounts to USD 5 015 681.

4.2 FAO's Country Programming Framework

9. FAO's mandate in Moldova is to support national efforts to promote food security and sustainable development. FAO priorities in Moldova reflect the objectives and priorities of the government set in the strategy papers related to agricultural development. In essence, FAO assists the Government in creating and implementing an institutional, legal, and regulatory environment. The government approach towards economic and social reforms implies alleviating current poverty by employing intense and sustainable economic growth. The CPF sets out three priority areas that directly reflect the priorities of the Moldova National Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy 2014–2020 according to the comparative advantage of the Organization: i) increasing competitiveness of the agri-food sector; ii) fostering sustainable agriculture and rural development; and iii) improving capacity for sustainable management of natural resources and disaster risk management.

5. Scope of the evaluation

10. CPEs generally cover the totality of the institution's assistance provided to an FAO Member State, irrespective of the source of funding. This includes activities funded through the regular programme as well as extra-budgetary resources; national, regional and global projects and initiatives; emergency and development interventions.
11. Since the CPE is a Programme Evaluation, the exercise does not focus on a single project, but rather assesses FAO's overall contribution to results in the priority areas defined in the CPF. Also, use and usefulness of FAO's global knowledge products and services (guidelines, publications, training programmes, etc.) and relevant regional initiative (RI) are assessed within each CPF priority area.

6. Objectives

12. The specific objectives of the CPE are to:
 - i. assess the strategic relevance of FAO's interventions in responding to country needs;
 - ii. assess FAO's contributions to results identified in the CPF under the three priority areas;
 - iii. identify lessons learned as well as causes of successes and failures; and
 - iv. identify gaps in FAO's country programming and potential areas of future work.

7. Evaluation questions

13. The following overarching questions have been developed to further define the objective of the evaluation.

7.1 Strategic positioning and relevance

- i. Has FAO been addressing the most important challenges in the areas of FAO's competence?
- ii. To what extent is FAO's programme aligned with national development plans, strategies and policies? Are there any gaps or missed opportunities?
- iii. Has FAO responded appropriately to needs as they arise as a consequence of natural or man-induced emergencies?
- iv. To what extent has FAO's programme in Moldova been in line with and supportive of FAO's Strategic Framework?
- v. Is FAO adequately supporting the national processes for achieving, monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

7.1.1 Normative values

- i. Have normative values of the United Nations, particularly supporting the poor, marginalized, disadvantaged and affected populations been embedded into FAO's programme and how?
- ii. To what extent has FAO taken into account equity, gender and human rights in the design of its programme and during the implementation?

7.1.2 Partnership and coordination

- i. How did FAO engage in partnerships and to what extent were these partnerships complementary and synergetic?
- ii. To what extent has FAO supported the coordination of actors working in the rural development and agriculture sector?
- iii. To what extent has FAO contributed to influence the position and decisions of partners in relation to food and nutrition security and safety and has it had a role as convenor?

7.1.3 Comparative advantage

- i. What role has FAO played vis-à-vis other development actors (national and local government, civil society, the private sector, and other international development partners) and did it draw from its own comparative advantage?

7.2 Programme contribution: Are we making a difference?

For each CPF Outcome:

7.2.1 Relevance

- i. How does FAO identify needs? Is the development of projects based on a sound and well-grounded analysis?
- ii. How appropriate have FAO's activities been to achieve the planned CPF outcomes?
- iii. In capacity development and providing policy and technical advice, has FAO supported the key actors and provided the necessary technical content?
- iv. In direct support, has FAO targeted the poorest and most vulnerable households and responded to their needs, including women and young people?

7.2.2 Effectiveness and contributions to results

- i. What changes can be observed that are attributable to FAO's interventions (i.e., behavioural changes; institutional changes; policy changes; technical adaptations; tangible environmental and socio-economic benefits)?
- ii. To what extent have these changes contributed to progress towards outcomes?

7.2.3 Sustainability of results

- i. Have FAO activities had proper exit strategies and have these been followed?
- ii. To what extent have the changes that were generated been sustainable?
- iii. To what extent are the results owned by beneficiaries?
- iv. Have livelihoods been affected by results on the medium and long-term and how?

7.2.4 Coherence and synergies

- i. Has FAO focused on activities that will achieve best results vis-à-vis its resources?
- ii. What kind of partnerships has FAO established and to what extent have these enhanced its capacity to achieve desired results?
- iii. What were the critical constraints in implementing FAO projects? (mainly targeting partners, implementing partners/service providers)
- iv. To what extent have FAO's regional initiatives provided coherent and/or complementary support in view of achieving the CPF results?
- v. To what extent has the technical and advisory support from the FAO headquarters and REU represented an added value?
- vi. To what extent has the FAO Country Office provided support in achieving CPF results?
- vii. Has FAO's knowledge base (normative products, guidelines, publications, etc.) been used at country level?
- viii. To what extent is FAO's programming coherent (in terms of the interventions)?

7.2.5 Cross-cutting issues

- i. To what extent has FAO's programme integrated cross-cutting issues (gender equality and other equity issues, climate change adaptation and resilience considerations, public discourse or action on governance-related matters, nutrition-considerations) at different levels - policy, project design, and implementation - according to various sectors of intervention?

8. Methodology

14. The evaluation will be guided by the above evaluation questions. More specific evaluation questions contextualised according to different types of activities, individual projects, and stakeholders involved will be developed for each priority area under review. These specific questions will be proposed by the team and validated with FAO Country Office staff.
15. To answer the question “strategic positioning: are we responding to the country’s needs”, the team will start by analysing whether the FAO programme was based on a preliminary assessment of the needs of different stakeholders: e.g. Government, research centres, communities and vulnerable households. It will then identify what these needs were, and whether the programme responded to them. To gather information related to this question the team will conduct semi-structured interviews and review relevant documents.
16. Through stakeholder mapping carried out with the support from the Country Office, the team will identify who is best able to respond to each question. Sources of information will be key informants, internal and external stakeholders at the central and decentralised levels and secondary sources. The team will develop protocols for interviews and further update them during the evaluation exercise's initial phase. If feasible, workshops/exchanges targeting different stakeholders will be organized to identify issues, lessons learned, and potential areas for future interventions. The evaluation team will develop facilitation techniques at the beginning of the evaluation exercise and employ them during the workshops. Information from different sources will be validated through triangulation.
17. If feasible under the current travel restrictions, the evaluation team will visit designated project sites for field visits. They will be selected in consultation with the Country Office, aiming at relevance, geographic and thematic variety. During site visits the team will use different evaluation tools, both quantitative and qualitative, to collect the views of the beneficiaries and of communities at large. The evaluation will adopt a consultative approach, seeking and sharing opinions with stakeholders at different stages throughout the process. Different sources will be used to verify information. Triangulation of information across stakeholders will be a key approach for validating evidence. The evaluation will follow United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards⁶ as well as ethical guidelines. Gender and equity aspects will be examined throughout the evaluation.

⁶UNEG. 2020. Norms and standards for evaluation. [UNEG 2016](#).

9. Process

9.1 Review of secondary data

18. The evaluation proposes to take advantage of existing data as an initial source of information; and will thereby draw from FAO information systems; publications and reports availed by the focal point for this evaluation, including evaluation reports; and from other relevant documentation sources. This will be useful to inform all evaluation questions.
19. A preliminary mapping of available resources and expertise available at country level would serve to inform on the appropriateness of organizational setup in implementing the CPF. It would provide a more refined basis for the analysis of synergetic effects across the various units both at headquarters and field levels contributing to implementing the development priorities for collaboration between FAO and the Republic of Moldova. In addition to the preliminary review conducted, the evaluation team will analyse policy documents based on information obtained during interviews, field visits/case studies, and interactions with the FAO REU Regional Programme Leader (RPL) and Assistant Representative, Programme Moldova, the acting focal point for this evaluation. The evaluation team will also conduct a portfolio analysis. Further interviews will be conducted to triangulate findings and reveal additional issues.
20. In particular, the following desk-based data sourcing and analysis is proposed:
 - i. Mapping of the FAO projects and initiatives under the current CPF cycle (2016–2019) and of the resources and the modalities of implementation to provide a general overview of how the CPF priority areas have been covered.
 - ii. Mapping of data on results achieved from monitoring and reporting systems at headquarters, regional and country level (including reports to FAO Governing Bodies, corporate monitoring and reporting systems, project progress reports and service level agreements, annual reports).
 - iii. Use of on-going evaluations of relevance including project evaluations.

9.2 Primary data collection: interviews of FAO stakeholders, counterparts and partners

21. Based on the identified areas of inquiry that may not be adequately covered through the analysis of secondary data, the evaluation will need to collect primary data from stakeholders who are directly or indirectly connected to implementing the development priorities for collaboration between FAO and the Republic of Moldova, and from relevant counterparts and partners of FAO's work at national and international levels.
22. The evaluation will conduct semi-structured interviews to further refine the team's understanding of the modalities of strategy implementation and collect evidence that may inform the evaluation findings on the strategic value, emerging results, and implementation dynamics. Face-to-face interviews will be complemented by interviews through teleconferencing, whenever feasible and most appropriate.
23. Face-to-face interviews will take place at FAO headquarters and in FAO regional and country offices. The selection of interviewees for in-depth data collection is guided by the necessity to cover various areas of work encompassed by the CPF and a need for diversity in observers' viewpoints.

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24. When practical and appropriate, the evaluation team's visits to the country office will be complemented by visits to the FAO regional office. These visits will offer an opportunity to examine regional programmes covered under CPF priority areas and types of support provided by FAO units established at the regional level.
 25. The credibility of evaluation findings will also hinge on a constant effort to validate the evidence gathered through information sources' systematic triangulation. It is also founded on explicit endeavors to consult with various stakeholders to ensure the assessment is based on a comprehensive understanding of diverse perspectives on issues, performance, and outcomes.

9.3 Main evaluation steps

26. These steps will include the following:
 - i. desk review of existing documentation, and in particular any previous evaluations, monitoring information and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) studies;
 - ii. based on the information provided by the REU RPL and designated focal point for CPE Moldova for finalizing the approach paper, the TORs will be developed;
 - iii. with the support of the Country Office, mapping of FAO's internal and external stakeholders able to provide information in relation to the evaluation questions;
 - iv. consultation with key informants, national institutions at central and decentralised level, and representatives of bilateral and multilateral development partners, including donors, NGOs, civil society organizations, UN agencies, communities and others in Moldova, FAO Regional Office and at FAO headquarters in Rome; and
 - v. field visits – if feasible - to selected project sites to meet with government staff at regional and district levels, project beneficiaries, and beneficiary communities.
27. The main evaluation mission will take place in the period March – May 2021 to analyse the information collected, on the basis of which the team will discuss and agree on main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned. At the end of this mission, preliminary results will be presented to the FAO Country Office personnel.

9.4 Drafting and dissemination of the report, follow up of findings, conclusions and recommendations

28. The Evaluation Manager will consolidate team members' contributions to prepare the draft report under the Senior Evaluation Officer's supervision. The draft report will be circulated to relevant FAO personnel, who will provide comments and suggestions before the finalisation of the report.
29. The final draft report will be presented to the national government counterparts, development partners, implementing partners, and other national and regional stakeholders to validate the team's overall conclusions, build consensus on the way forward, and promote ownership of the evaluation results and maximise their use. The FAO Representative will be responsible for coordinating the management response to the report and its recommendations.

30. Wide dissemination of the report to maximise the impact of the evaluation results will be ensured by OED, with the relevant FAO personnel's support. The final report and FAO's management response are public documents and will be broadly disseminated both internally and externally.⁷

⁷ OED posts all reports on the OED website. The FAO Representative is responsible for distributing the report to all key stakeholders at the country level after its finalization.

10. Organization of the evaluation

10.1 Roles and responsibilities

31. Office of Evaluation: OED is responsible for managing the evaluation and leading the team through the designated Evaluation Manager. During the preparatory phase, the Evaluation Manager is responsible for drafting the TORs for the evaluation, selecting team members, and drafting individual TORs. In the main evaluation phase, the Evaluation Manager will oversee and guide the evaluation team, especially during the launch. Towards the end of the evaluation, the Evaluation Manager will facilitate discussions during the analysis of findings, conclusions and recommendations.
32. Evaluation team: The evaluation team will be responsible for collecting data and analysing evidence to develop findings, conclusions and recommendations under their areas of responsibility. For this purpose, the Evaluation Manager will assist in coordinating the teamwork. The team members will participate in the initial briefing sessions delivered by OED, and through group discussions will contribute to the refinement of the methodology and preparation of the evaluation tools. At the beginning of the main evaluation phase, each team member will carry out a desk review of documents in their area of work. During the investigation phase, team members will conduct individual and group interviews with internal and external stakeholders, participate in field visits to project sites, participate in the analysis session and at the initial stakeholder debriefing, contribute written inputs to the evaluation report and support the Evaluation Manager in the consolidation of these inputs for the preparation of the draft report. Once the draft report is circulated and the comments received, the team members will provide advice on the integration of comments received from relevant FAO personnel.
33. Country Office: The Country Office personnel will provide comments on the approach paper, TORs, support OED in mapping FAO's stakeholders in the country, support the preparation of the evaluation programme and the identification of locations for the field visits, ensure that the team has access to all relevant documentation, be available for meetings and discussions with the evaluation team, provide administrative and logistical support to the evaluation as needed, and provide comments to the draft report. The FAO Representative (with the support of REU and with inputs from relevant units at headquarters) is responsible for leading and coordinating the preparation of the management response, and (after one year of preparing the follow-up report) informing on progress in the implementation of the evaluation's recommendations.
34. REU and headquarters divisions: Relevant headquarters divisions and FAO personnel involved in the country programme will also provide their comments to the draft TORs and later to the draft report, ensure time for meetings with team members, and provide information and documentation upon request. In case the need arises for hiring local consultants, the FAO Country Office should facilitate the recruitment process.

10.2 Composition and profile of the evaluation team

35. The evaluation team will include experts with technical and evaluation expertise, who will work under the supervision of the OED Evaluation Manager. An effort will be made to identify evaluation experts based in the country, and to achieve gender balance in the team composition. Following the preparatory phase, potential necessary expertise identified for members of the evaluation team are the following:

- i. expertise in trade, food safety, and European Union development cooperation to assess the results achieved under the CPF priority area of increasing competitiveness of the agri-food sector (including food safety, veterinary and plant protection);
- ii. expertise in policy analysis to assess the performance and results of work at the policy and institutional levels, particularly concerning FAO support in formulating and implementing better agriculture and rural development policies to foster sustainable agriculture and promote rural development; and
- iii. expertise in climate change for assessing the results achieved under the CPF priority area of sustainable management of natural resources and disaster risk management, essential to food production, enhanced rural development, and sustainable livelihoods.

36. The ultimate goal is to provide a forward-looking contribution to enhancing FAO's work in these areas.

10.3 Evaluation timeline

Timeframe	Activity
January 2021	Concept note/approach paper and development of TORs
February 2021	Portfolio analysis and scoping
February - March 2021	Desk review of relevant projects, evaluations and other documentation
February - March 2021	Team of experts identified and hired
March-May 2021	Data collection and main evaluation mission to the country
May-June 2021	Drafting of report and distribution of draft to Country Office for comments
June-July 2021	Integration of comments and preparation of the final draft report
August-September 2021	Publication of the final report and dissemination