

Country Programme Evaluation Series

Evaluation of the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean 2017–2020

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Introduction

1. OED will conduct an evaluation of FAO's Regional Office (RO) for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) with the aim of providing recommendations that will contribute to improving FAO's work in the region. The evaluation was endorsed by the Programme Committee at its 127th session¹ (November 2019) and will take place in a period of major internal and external changes.
2. Firstly, 2020 marks the second year of a new Director-General at FAO and the start of a new Strategic Planning process, which is expected to bring several changes to the way FAO plans and monitors its work at the corporate level. The revised Programme and Work of Budget (PWB) for 2020–21 (to be discussed in May 2020) and the new Strategic Framework (SF) 2021–2030 (to be outlined in June 2020) will provide further details on those programmatic and operational changes.
3. Secondly, the internal review of FAO's regional structures (June 2019), which confirmed the suitability of regional initiatives (RI) as mechanism to deliver on regional work, has identified five major challenges affecting the performance of ROs, namely: i) regional governance; ii) integration of policy and normative functions, linked with investment formulation; iii) adopting a programmatic approach, iv) boosting operational capacity; v) knowledge management and M&E, vi) human resources management (skills-mix; capacities; networks of excellence), vii) partnerships and leveraging of resources; and, viii) UN reform. Corporate measures to tackle these challenges might be detailed in the upcoming PWB and SF.
4. The UN reform potentially has major implications at regional level. The Secretary General has proposed five broad transformative areas for change, namely: i) the creation of a "UN Regional Collaborative Platform" to foster collaboration across UN system; ii) the establishment of a strong knowledge management hub by pooling together policy expertise currently scattered across entities; c) enhancing transparency and result-based management including through annual reporting on regional system-wide results; d) the launch of a change management process aimed at consolidating existing capacities around data and statistics, and e) the identification of administrative services that could be provided more efficiently through common back offices. A progress report on actions taken by regional entities will be discussed by ECOSOC in May 2020.
5. Finally, the current COVID-19 pandemic, which although in its early stages, is already affecting the region with unknown economic and social implications/consequences. By April 2020 most countries (including Chile, where RLC is based) have taken measures to reduce the rate of infection, but to date there is no clear timeframe for a return to normality. The pandemic has already disrupted the work of RLC as well as of all FAO decentralized offices, forcing the postponement of the regional conference (initially planned for April 2020) and of an external audit of RLC (initially planned for June 2020).
6. In view of these factors, the evaluation's inception phase will be extended to July 2020, with the hope that the evaluation could be conducted between August and October. By then, perhaps, the regional conference would have taken place, and the evaluation could also benefit from a clearer understanding of corporate/regional changes in FAO, as well as of the long-term effects of COVID-19 in the region.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/na582en/na582en.pdf>

Background

7. RLC was established in 1955 and is responsible for ensuring FAO's support to 33 Latin American and Caribbean States that are FAO Members and work with the Organization to guarantee food security for all their inhabitants. Besides RLC, other FAO offices in the region include the Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean, located in Barbados; the Sub-regional Office for Mesoamerica, located in Panama; and, country offices in 23 countries².
8. There is no updated repository of RO's roles and responsibilities³; based on discussions with relevant HQ (SP teams, OSD, DDO) and RO staff the most common functions appear to be the following:
 - i. Support the achievement, in the Region, of FAO's Strategic Objectives and organizational outcomes, and the Organization's contributions to the SDGs, and monitor and report progress
 - ii. Represent the Organization, advocating its policy positions and communicating its messages
 - iii. Lead regional policy dialogue, resource mobilization/aid coordination, partnership, knowledge sharing and capacity development
 - iv. Lead the formulation and implementation of regional initiatives and projects.
 - v. Support the design and efficient implementation of country programmes and projects
 - vi. Manage the TCP regional appropriation (to be covered by a separate evaluation)
 - vii. Oversee and manage FAO's office network in the region
 - viii. Provide administrative and operational services
 - ix. Support resource mobilization at all levels
 - x. Assuring security of the RO and its staff

² 2 Partnership and Liaison Offices; 20 Fully Fledge Representations; 1 Multiple Accreditation Office with Staff, and 10 Multiple Accreditation Offices without Staff.

³ Compiled with information from the FAO Manual section 117 (outdated), OSD and OSP.

Objectives, questions and methodology

9. The evaluation's main objective is **to assess the added-value of RLC in support of FAO's work in the region**, bearing in mind the different roles and responsibilities of RLC vis-à-vis headquarters and other Decentralized Offices (DOs): SLM, SLC, the country network. It will do so by assessing the strategic relevance of RLC's work and its contribution to development results.
10. **RLC's strategic relevance** will be assessed by examining the significance and adequacy of RLC's regional priorities and initiatives to the needs and demands for assistance of countries and partners.
11. Given the preponderant role played by the regional initiatives (RI) to deliver FAO's regional work (see appendix 1 for an overview on the RIs), the evaluation will examine **RLC's contributions** based on the Theory of Change (ToC) of the RIs. In consultation with RLC staff, a theory-based narrative that clearly identifies RLC's role in the design and implementation of the RIs will be prepared. RLC performance in support of the RIs will then be assessed, through the prism of its key functions⁴:
 - i. Analytical (data, research, analysis and policy/technical advice, including policy dialogue)
 - ii. Operational (programme delivery and support to countries, including guidance and training to DOs)
 - iii. Brokering (bringing people and organizations together for a purpose, including from within FAO)
12. In view of RLC's major role in promoting an **enabling working environment** and the application of UN normative values, the evaluation will also assess RLC's work in developing capacities of country offices⁵ (i.e., through the provision of support and backstopping services in operational, risk management, HR and financial matters) as well as in promoting inclusive and equitable programmes and practices. Finally, the evaluation will take stock of the lessons, challenges and opportunities identified during the assessment and
13. In brief, the evaluation will ask the following questions:
 - i. How relevant have FAO regional priorities and initiatives been to the needs and demands of member countries?
 - ii. How adequate, relevant and useful was RLC's work on data, analysis and policy advice/dialogue to member countries?
 - iii. How effective was RLC in advocating FAO policy messages?
 - iv. To what extent has RLC supported the design and implementation of relevant and high-quality country programmes and projects?
 - v. To what extent has RLC's programme monitoring and learning initiatives contributed to more evidence-based decision-making?
 - vi. To what extent has RLC been successful in mobilizing external and internal support for the achievement of regional and country-level goals?

⁴ Originally used by CEPEI for their ECOSOC study: "A Sustainable Regional UN" (April 2019)

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/Cepei-Official-Report-short.pdf>

⁵ Including the role of the newly-created "support teams" for rapid growth countries and resource mobilization.

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- vii. How effective has RLC been in promoting inclusive and equitable programmes and projects in the region?
 - viii. How effective has RLC been in articulating a suitable response to COVID-19?
 - ix. Looking ahead, what are the main lessons, challenges and opportunities for RLC?
14. The evaluation will conduct a thorough review of documents related to RLC's work, as well as interviews and surveys. A full description of the evaluation sub-questions, indicators, data sources and data collection methods will be developed by the team in the inception report.
15. The evaluation will be conducted in a consultative manner, ensuring the involvement of staff⁶ and clients throughout the process, and following the methodological and normative guidance contained in the FAO evaluation manual and the UN Evaluation Norms and Standards⁷.

⁶ Besides RLC staff, the evaluation will also involve members of the Strategic Programme (SP) teams and relevant units at headquarters (such as OSD, OSP, OCC, PSP, PSR, etc.) and the field (FAORs, SLM, SLC).

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/resources/manuals-guidelines/en/>

Scope

16. For the assessment of RLC's strategic relevance, the evaluation will review work conducted between 2014–19 related to the formulation and implementation of regional initiatives. The assessment of RLC's contributions will focus instead in the period January 2017 to date, with a particular attention to assessing the effects of innovations/good practices introduced since June 2017 on RLC's performance.
17. The evaluation will consider the period from January- June 2020 separately, as to ensure that disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic will not influence the analysis and findings related to RLC's past work. Looking ahead, the evaluation will review RLC's COVID-19 response as well as guidance on new priorities and regional initiatives (to be discussed at the Regional Conference sometime in 2020) and corporate medium-term plans (to be discussed at the FAO Council in June 2020).

Timeline

18. The evaluation will start with a highly consultative scoping phase (December 2019–March 2020), which will include discussions with staff from RLC, Sub-regional offices and headquarters and review of key documentation. This will be followed by an inception phase (April–July 2020), during which engagement with FAO staff will continue in order to reconstruct the “Theory of Change” for the RIs, fine-tune the evaluation sub-questions and methodology, finalize the selection of external experts and undertake several mapping exercises and analyses.
19. The data collection phase (August–October 2020) will start with briefings with the evaluation team and the holding of virtual workshops to “harvest” the outcomes of RLC’s work (tentatively in August 2020), which will be complemented by remote interviews and surveys as necessary. In order to avoid duplication of efforts and promote synergies, studies conducted as part of other evaluations (such as the CPE in Colombia) will be used to collect relevant information. At the end of this phase, a debriefing will be organized to present the preliminary findings of the evaluation (tentatively in January 2021). The draft report will be prepared and finalized in the period February–May 2021.

Composition of the evaluation team

20. The evaluation will be managed by OED and conducted by a team of external experts and OED staff. The evaluation manager will be responsible for the Terms of Reference (ToR), while the draft report will be prepared by the evaluation team. OED will provide logistical and research support to the evaluation team, as well as quality assurance of the final report.
21. The external experts will have the following combined competences and expertise:
 - i. in-depth knowledge of the food and agricultural sector, as well as of the development and humanitarian landscape in Latin America and the Caribbean;
 - ii. excellent command of gender and equity issues in the region;
 - iii. recognized experience in policy advice, strategic planning and policy/programme/process evaluation; and
 - iv. advanced technical expertise in the areas covered by the IRs.
22. Given the evaluation's broad scope and the limitations for field travel, OED will engage several external experts (6-7) with specific tasks who will work under the guidance and coordination of a lead consultant.

Deliverables

23. The main deliverables will be the following:
 - i. Terms of Reference (April 2020) – OED
 - ii. Inception report (August 2020) – OED and evaluation team
 - iii. Draft report (April 2021) – Evaluation team
 - iv. Final report (May 2021) – OED and evaluation team

Appendix 1. Brief overview of Regional Initiatives

Regional Initiative 1 - Hunger-Free Latin America and Caribbean Initiative

Latin America and the Caribbean was the first region worldwide committing to completely eradicate hunger by 2025. This commitment is based on the unique progress achieved by this region, which is the only one who reached both international targets in hunger reduction - the World Food Summit's and the Millennium Development Goals' - of halving both the number and percentage of undernourished people.

One of the crucial aspects behind this achievement has been a high-level political commitment, translated into regional, subregional and national hunger eradication plans and strategies. Through this initiative, FAO is supporting major food security arrangements in the region through all sectors of society to ensure the right to food for all.

Regional Initiative 2 - Family farming and inclusive food systems for sustainable rural development

This priority area of FAO aims at improving access of family farmers to the goods and services required for strengthening production, management and organization.

It promotes productive development and social wellbeing of family farming and appropriate representation and participation of food systems and rural development strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean, a key factor in the eradication of hunger in the Region.

Regional Initiative 3 - Sustainable use of natural resources, adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management

The eradication of hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean requires a paradigm shift: the Region shall adopt a fully sustainable agricultural model which protects natural resources, generates an equitable socio-economic development and allows adapting to climate change and coping with the increasingly frequent natural disasters.

Through the regional priority engaged in the Sustainable use of natural resources, climate change adaptation and risk management, this initiative will promote actions supporting transition towards sustainable development of agriculture, fisheries and forests from a socioeconomic and environmental perspective, strengthening food security and nutrition regarding the new Sustainable Development Goals.

Source: http://www.fao.org/americas/prioridades/en/?no_cache=1 (downloaded on 1 April 2020).

Appendix 2. Documents to be reviewed (non-exhaustive list)

- i. FAOR Country Annual Reports
- ii. Country Programming Frameworks
- iii. RIs reports
- iv. COA results
- v. Previous evaluations of RLC and SLM (e.g. Strategic Framework Programmes, SDGs, Thematic).
- vi. Reports of Regional Conferences
- vii. PWBs
- viii. Strategic Framework
- ix. Internal and External Audit Report(s)
- x. Manuals/guidelines that govern the roles and responsibilities of RLC, SLM, SLC and FAORs
- xi. Regional work-plans
- xii. Relevant report(s) and data on the food and agricultural status and issues in the region
- xiii. OIG reports (on project cycle)
- xiv. Documents prepared for LARC36

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