# Evaluation of the project "Cross-cutting: Targeted support for agricultural statistical innovation at FAO"

# Project code: MTF/GLO/707/BMG

**Follow-up report**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**
**Rome, 2024**

| Evaluation Recommendation | Management response Accepted, Partially accepted or Rejected | Management plan | | Management Action Record Score | Impact of, or changes resulted from taken actions |
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| | | Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection | Description of actions actually taken, or reasons for actions not taken | | |
| **Recommendation 1**. It is recommended that future multi-component projects that share a common objective, but not strong synergies should generally not be proposed or at least should include a stronger management coordination component, both within FAO and by the Gates Foundation in its work with FAO. Errore. L'origine riferimento non è stata trovata.*(See Finding 2)*. | **Partially accepted** | In the future, formulators should adopt different administrative solutions/ project management modalities that could better support implementation and operational management by allowing the subteams to oversee their component with greater independence. If this solution is adopted, a higher coordination budget should be agreed to allow for a central team to provide overall oversight and administrative support for the programme as a whole. | The implementation modality has undergone a change, as we now execute subprograms as distinct and independent grants. | Excellent | This adjustment has proven highly beneficial in enhancing the coordination of activities for each subprogram, leading to more efficient and streamlined operations. |
| **Recommendation 2**. The effectiveness and efficiency of FAO's external stakeholder communications, particularly at country level, should be addressed and improved by implementing an appropriate and adaptable, Constituent Relationship Management (CRM), including application software. *(See Conclusion 2)*. The general characteristics of a CRM application should enable it to manage and track the status and progress of the | **Partially accepted** | We recognize the importance of tracking relationships with stakeholders, but in terms of specific applications of the CRM system, we remain of the opinion that the cost, compared to the actual benefit, would have been excessive. The implementation of CRM would have been complex to apply in the framework of this specific project, with the lack | The CRM has not been adopted yet in the context of the FIES activities. The team is still trying to understand if the CRM could be really useful for the activities considering the objectives of the current project. | None/poor | NA |

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| individual project activities related to each of its stakeholders, reducing the time required for this task.  This would be done by maintaining and updating contact records of official interactions with stakeholders, especially national ministry contact persons.  It would have the ability to flag non-current or unreliable contact records as well as to cater for multiple focal points for different contexts.  For example, it could more easily identify national staff trained on FIES analysis in addition to the SDG focal person. These staff often move between posts.

This recommendation is applicable across all the project components that had country level contact. In particular it is relevant to the approval of the publication of SDG indicator estimates and the validation of FIES estimates with the relevant national institutions.  The information system, based on the above CRM, should automate the tracking of FIES estimate validation and adoption, with links to the microdata publication process. The application should be able to generate reports automatically on the periodicity, current timelines, and status of FIES data collection and analysis as incorporated within the national surveys. | | of other known similar applications within FAO, making it all the more difficult, and would, therefore, had detracted focus from the main objectives of the project. In the case of Food Security and Nutrition Statistics team, in charge of the FIES, the use of the CRM has not been considered so far but the team is willing, with the needed support, to evaluate the possibility of using it. | | | |

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| **Recommendation 3**.<br>FAO should continue its support for Stream A of the Interoperable Agricultural Investment Data component, notably in discussions with UNSD concerning their adoption of its methodology. This support should recognize the highly innovative nature of the methodology underlying Caliper as an interoperable classification's server and its potential general applicability across the field of statistics. In particular, Caliper would be useful at country level to manage and improve the use of national classifications.  It would benefit from further support from the Gates Foundation to this end. *(See Conclusion 3)*. | **Accepted** | Caliper is now the FAO platform for the dissemination of statistical classifications. Based on this evidence, ESS will continue dialogue with UNSD aimed at promoting a larger adoption of Caliper - both inside the two Organizations and with other partners. FAO will support collaborations with NSOs to encourage the creation of country-specific "nodes" of Caliper. | FAO continues to support efforts to improve the interoperability of agricultural data. Caliper is the FAO platform for the dissemination of statistical classifications and based on that FAO and UNSD are working on a plan to use Caliper for a larger collaboration on the interoperability of international classifications and thus of statistical data. The partnership would involve FAO and UNSD in the first place, soon to be extended to other interested partners, including national statistical offices and other international organizations.<br>ESS is also promoting the use on the same technology internally to the Organization, with the setup of an internal instance of Caliper dedicated to serving statistical data to internal statistical systems. The work plans for Caliper in 2024 also include the writing of a technical working paper and, soon after, the submission of the paper to a peer-reviewed journal, to sensitize the Organization on the issue of data interoperability and present Caliper as a solution to it. | Excellent | FAO's continued support on Caliper and in general on the issue of data interoperability has led the organization to extend the functionalities of Caliper as the master data management system for the internal Statistical Working System. New requirements are being considered such as the production SDMX output (preliminary work in progress in collaboration with Eurostat). Also, FAO is now part of the international Community of Practice on Linked Open Data for statistics, led by EUROSTAT. |
| **Recommendation 4.**<br>FAO and the Gates Foundation should provide continued support, as currently organized, for the 50x2030 Initiative, as the | **Accepted** | The ESS Division in collaboration with the country representations and the regional offices will guarantee technical | Two new grants have been signed between the Gates foundation and FAO for covering a total of 17 additional countries in Africa in the framework of 50x2030 initiative. In countries not eligible, arrangements have | Excellent | 17 additional countries benefiting from technical assistance on the implementation of |

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| successor to the AGRISurvey and Open Data components. In countries not eligible for 50x2030 Initiative, FAO should continue supporting the AGRIS survey approach. *(See Conclusions 4-7).* | | assistance to countries interested in establishing or improving national agricultural surveys when resources are available. The technical support will take stock of the lessons learned in the implementation of AGRISurvey and 50x2030 Initiative." | been taken within the ESS division for guaranteeing some technical support to countries | | 50x2030 agricultural integrated surveys. |
| **Recommendation 5.** FAO should fully integrate operationally any continuing Open Data activities with AGRISurvey, while maintaining a distinct statistics dissemination unit within FAO (FAM Catalogue). FAO should continue to maintain FAM and sustain activities related to it as a distinct microdata dissemination platform within FAO. *(See Conclusion 4).* | Accepted | FAO Statistics Division (and OCS) will continue providing technical assistance on Open Data activities with application to agricultural statistics, including in countries not supported by existing donor funded projects (e.g., GSARS and 50x2030). The OCS has already been involved in mobilizing resources for sustaining the FAM activities and accordingly a project proposal has been developed and submitted to potential donors. Moreover, a revised proposal with minimum funding resource request | Leveraging the experience and technical expertise acquired through the AGRISurvey, FAO has continued delivering technical assistance in the realm of Open Data, encompassing the sharing of microdata. The response from national partners has been highly positive, leading to an expanded geographical reach in terms of beneficiary countries. This approach facilitated capacity building and technical assistance in Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania—countries not included in the original project. FAO is committed to sustaining these efforts, with the list of countries set to further grow as support in this area continues. Since its launch in 2019, the FAM catalogue has become a reference point for the | Excellent | Increased capacity in the area of Open Data for the staff of National Statistical Office and Line Ministries in at least 12 additional countries. The Microdata catalogue has witnessed a continual rise in the number of surveys, with an impressive addition of over 100 new studies in the year 2023 alone. Total number of studies as of January 2024 exceeds 1300 references. This expansion not only benefits users but also contributes to an increased utilization of |

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| | | from the regular program has also been developed and submitted to FAO management. The recommendation will immediately start to be implemented as soon as positive responses are obtained either from the potential donors of the FAO management. | dissemination of microdata related to food and agriculture. As a testament to the significant importance the statistics division places on the FAM catalogue, a dedicated unit has been consolidated. This unit is tasked with not only continuing to populate the catalogue but also enhancing its visibility as well as overall functionality and features. The Office of Chief Statistician has put in place different standards and protocols to guide the curation, anonymization and dissemination of microdata on the FAM Catalogue to make sure that microdata and metadata are disseminated in line with international standards and best practices. | | data resources. The communication initiatives surrounding the catalogue have successfully heightened user awareness of the available tools, resulting in a direct impact— namely, an increase in the number of registered users, which amounts to over 53 000 registered users. |
| **Recommendation 6.** <br> Partners should be sought for implementing Open Data activities that are not related to agricultural statistics, such as the revision of legislation covering respondent confidentiality. *(See Finding 6)* | **Accepted** | | Limited action has been taken in terms of involvement in the "legislative process," which generally encompasses the introduction, deliberation, and voting on proposed laws within a designated legislative body. This falls outside the purview of the Statistics Division when collaborating with countries. The Statistics Division primarily functions as a technical division. Similarly, the country-level partners such as national statistics offices are technical and not policy offices. <br><br> However, the FAO Statistics Division (ESS) has been actively engaging with countries on various fronts, including enhancing | None/poor | Deepening of dissemination program of National Statistical Offices and Line Ministries, with application beyond the sole agriculture data. Spillover effects to other data domains observed in Senegal, Cambodia, or Egypt. |

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| | | | dissemination strategies and programs within the GSARS and 50x2030 partnerships. Moreover, ongoing technical collaboration with national agencies focuses on opening access to data does create an impact beyond agricultural data alone. Dissemination strategies within a statistical office are normally designed to be implemented uniformly across the agency. This is how there are instances of countries where a spillover effect on other domains is observed. For example, in Cambodia, the INS management now recommends implementing the dissemination model introduced by the AGRISurvey across all technical thematic domains within the INS. In Senegal, FAO did provide a training on microdata dissemination in 2023 to the National Statistical Institute in preparation to the population and housing census (non-agriculture). | | |
| **Recommendation 7.** FAO should consider seeking funding to allocate more time for upfront and continuous on-the-job training on AGRISurvey modules for a faster turnaround. This would give ample time for the countries to familiarize themselves with the concepts, FAO should invest in designing and implementing an | **Accepted** | The tool is already in place, and continuously being improved, e.g., training materials under AGRIS Survey modules, which are already available. Additional support for the accelerated integration into 50x2030 is being provided by | Almost all new 50x2030 countries on the African continent have been benefitting from the implementation of GSARS, including survey design, master sampling frames, piloting data collection on agricultural production, farm economics, losses; data analysis and processing, compilation of indicators including farm typologies and dissemination. | Excellent | The interconnection between GSARS and 50x2030 has allowed countries to be rapidly operational for the implementation of a system of agricultural integrated surveys. This |

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| interoperable data quality management module to supplement the existing AGRISurvey modular approach. This module will need to have the capacity to integrate with national data quality assurance frameworks of various types. *(See Conclusion 7).* | | MTF/GLO/1078/ BMG. ESS continues to develop the mechanisms for guaranteeing data quality management. | | | has been recognized as well by the donors. |
| **Recommendation 8.** FAO should provide continued support and seek external financing for FIES on its current composition of data collection by both Gallup World Poll (or similar) and FIES modules integrated into national surveys. Support should take into account the expectation that the number of countries covered by GWP should decline over time in normal circumstances but that there is a possible continuing need for data collection by GWP (or similar) in some countries. *(See Conclusion 8).* | **Accepted** | ESS is continuously looking for more resources to directly collect and technically support FIES data collections in countries. | FAO as well as other donors are currently contributing to FIES data collection through the Gallup World Poll and by directly supporting national institutions with required financial resources. | Excellent | The Food Security and Nutrition Statistics team is giving continuity to its activity of reporting updated FIES estimates every year, contributing to the monitoring of the status of food security in the world. |
| **Recommendation 9.** In line with the recommendations in the 2018 evaluation of the Voices of the Hungry project, FAO should de-prioritize investment in the GWP data collection mechanism for high income countries. Instead, FAO should invest more effort to sensitize high-income countries to appropriately incorporate the FIES module | **Accepted** | This is a long-term objective as priority (advocacy and technical support activities) is given to low income – food deficit countries. This transition could be accelerated if more resources are mobilized. | FAO is advocating for the inclusion of the FIES survey module in structural surveys implemented in all the countries of the world. The adoption rate varies from country to country. Specifically, FAO is pushing for the adoption of the FIES survey module in the EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) survey, covering most of the countries of the EU. This is, however, a | Good | The adoption of the FIES Survey Module in structural surveys is increasing year by year, in both low income and high- income countries. FAO is providing technical support on data collection and |

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| in national surveys for increased reliance on national survey data for annual FIES estimates. Further to the recommendations in the past evaluation, FAO should invest more in technical capacity building among national institutions for the analysis of FIES data as included in their national surveys. *(See Conclusions 8-10).* | | | long-term objective as the adoption process requires a lot of effort and time. In parallel, FAO is continuing its technical support to countries to increase their independence on data collection and analysis. | | analysis on food security statistics to all those countries making formal requests of support. |
| **Recommendation 10.** FAO should invest in an increased understanding of the relevance and active use of FIES related information products beyond SDG reporting. This should be coupled with the promotion of collegiality and harmonized understanding among international organizations active in the global ecosystem of food security monitoring of how FIES based food insecurity data can be interpreted for use in policy and decision making. *(See Conclusions 8-10).* | **Accepted** | This is a crucial activity that ESS is prioritizing and currently implementing. Even in this case, the speed to achieve this objective is defined by the available resources. | A new project has been developed also with this objective. In the meantime, the FIES has been also officially endorsed as an indicator of the Integrated Phase Classification (Acute and Chronic protocols), increasing its domain of application, reporting and visibility. | Good | The FIES tool is increasingly being used at international level to monitor both chronic as well as acute food insecurity, to guide structural policies and interventions. |