

April 2011



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة للأمم
المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and
Agriculture
Organization
of the
United Nations

Organisation des
Nations Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольствен
ная и
сельскохозяйств
енная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones Unidas
para la
Agricultura y la
Alimentación

CONFERENCE

Thirty-seventh Session

Rome, 25 June - 2 July 2011

Final Report of the Open-ended Working Group on measures designed to increase the efficiency of Governing Bodies, including representation

Executive Summary

- Since its inception in April 2010, the OEWG held three meetings – in July and September 2010, and in February 2011 – and progress reports on its work were submitted after each meeting to the Council.
- The final report to the Conference covers cumulative progress achieved by the OEWG on the issues it addressed, namely: (i) membership of Council; (ii) working arrangements of the Technical Committees; (iii) duration and format of the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Commodity Problems; (iv) timeliness and accuracy of Governing Body documentation; (v) modern technologies for Governing Body sessions and inter-sessional work; and (vi) the revised Note on the methods of work of Council.

Suggested action by the Conference

- The Conference is invited to review the overall progress made by the OEWG in 2010-11, and to endorse the recommendations set out in this document, with regard to:
 - working arrangements of the Technical Committees;
 - duration and format of the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Commodity Problems;
 - timeliness and accuracy of Governing Body documentation;
 - modern technologies for Governing Body sessions and inter-sessional work.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

Mr Luc Guyau

Chairperson of the OEWG

This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies. Most FAO meeting documents are available on the Internet at www.fao.org

I. Introduction

1. In 2009 the Conference decided to establish an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) which, in the course of the 2010-11 biennium, would review and make recommendations regarding measures designed to increase the efficiency of the Governing Bodies, including representation. The OEWG was expected to draw, as appropriate, on the advice of the relevant Governing Bodies and to report to the Conference through the Council¹.
2. The OEWG was established at a meeting of FAO Members, called by the Independent Chairperson of Council, on 9 April 2010. The meeting adopted the arrangements of the OEWG, subsequently endorsed by the Council in May 2010², and given in Appendix 1.
3. The OEWG met three times - on 13 July and 23 September 2010, and on 22 February 2011 - and progress reports on its work were submitted after each meeting to the Council³ for review and guidance. The present final report of the OEWG to 37th Session of the Conference reflects the overall progress achieved in 2010-11, focusing on the conclusions reached and recommendations made throughout the process.
4. As per its mandate, the OEWG discussed the issue of Council membership, covered in section II, in addition to addressing a number of measures aimed at improving governance processes and working methods, which are described in section III.

II. Membership of Council

5. The membership of Council was on the agenda of the OEWG at its three scheduled meetings. As regards the number of Council seats, there was a widely shared conviction about the need to forge a broad consensus among Members, thus avoiding a vote on this issue at the Conference. However, an agreement could not be reached in this regard within the OEWG, with preferences being expressed mainly for two options: (i) either an increase in membership to 61; or (ii) maintaining the *status quo*, in which case the issue would remain open for further examination in the future.
6. As these preferences echoed the opinions for or against the enlargement of the Council, which had emerged from deliberations in the previous Conference Committees for the Follow-up to the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (CoC-IEE) in the course of 2008 and 2009, the OEWG deemed it pertinent to recall their rationale, as follows.

1. *Positions of Members*

7. Members supporting the option of an increase in seats argued that this would be in line with the growth of the membership of the Organization since 1977, thus ensuring wider participation, inclusiveness and representation of Members, and therefore leading to a more effective Council. It was further considered that a larger number of seats would be in keeping with the increased responsibilities of the Council arising from the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (IPA).
8. Members opposing the enlargement of the Council membership considered that: (i) an increase in the number of seats would adversely affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council in its executive functions; and (ii) more equitable representation in the Council could be better achieved by ensuring regular rotation among Members within the Regional Groups. Moreover, this would not be consistent with the alternative proposal made in the IEE report to reform the Council along the lines of an executive board – an option which could lead to enhanced sense of ownership and trust among Members.
9. During the discussion of this matter in the OEWG, it was noted that other ways of addressing the issue of equitable representation in the Council included the possibility of: (i) reducing the length of the term of Members from three to two years; and (ii) limiting the number of consecutive terms of office to two.

¹ C 2009/REP, paras. 155 and 156.

² CL 139/REP, para. 71.

³ CL 139/INF/7, CL 140/19 and CL 141/14.

2. *Proposal from the Independent Chairperson of Council*

10. In order to facilitate consensus, in October 2010 the Independent Chairperson of Council (ICC) circulated a proposal to OEWG Members setting forth a package of measures designed both to improve representation in Council and to enhance the efficiency of its work.

11. The main elements of the proposal from the ICC were:

- an increase in the number of Council seats from the present 49 to 56;
- a reduction in the term of office of Council Members from the current duration of three to two years, which would be in harmony with the biennial cycle of the Organization and its Governing Bodies, with the rotation of Council Members within the Regional Groups remaining under the responsibility of each Regional Group;
- as with other Governing Bodies, enhanced efficiency would be achieved through the combination of: (i) timeliness of documents, which would also be more focused and action-oriented; (ii) effective conduct of debates, with clear and concise summaries by the Chairperson; and (iii) use of new technologies when appropriate;
- the Council report would essentially consist of conclusions, decisions and recommendations, with the draft report drawn up by the Secretariat being sent to the ICC for information, and then submitted to the Drafting Committee for review;
- for inter-sessional work, the ICC would be assisted by a Council bureau (in addition to the informal meetings already held with the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups and the Council Committees).

12. In appreciating the ICC proposal, the OEWG reaffirmed its full endorsement of the efficiency measures proposed, namely the requirement of: (i) timely and concise meeting documents, with points for decision precisely outlined in front page boxes; (ii) clear summaries by the Chairperson focusing on the conclusions, decisions and recommendations arising from agenda items, to serve as a basis for the draft report. There was also wide support for the current arrangement whereby the authority to decide on rotation of Council Members is vested in the Regional Groups concerned.

13. The OEWG noted that different views were expressed on the establishment of a Council bureau, as outlined in the proposal of the ICC, with Members either: (i) supporting this new arrangement; or (ii) preferring the maximum use of informal meetings with the Chairpersons of the Regional Groups regularly convened by the ICC to gather the type of support expected from a bureau.

III. Other governance issues

1. *Working arrangements of the Technical Committees*

14. Bearing in mind that it was not expected to deal with matters addressed by other Governing Bodies as part of their respective mandates, the OEWG felt it appropriate to discuss where some degree of harmonization in the working methods of the Technical Committees could be achieved. This included the size and functions of *Bureaux*, as well as the duration and frequency of sessions of the Technical Committees, where problems had been experienced.

15. In so doing, the OEWG was cognizant of the outcomes of related discussions in other fora, particularly at the May 2010 session of Council and the April 2010 session of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM). In particular, the Council had invited the Technical Committees to examine their Rules of Procedure, taking into account the CCLM recommendations. The Council had acknowledged that authority to amend Rules of Procedure was vested in the Technical Committees, which had their own specific functional requirements. However, the Council had stressed the desirability of consistency among the Rules of Procedure of all Technical Committees.

16. As regards the *size of bureaux*, while it was pointed out that maximum inclusiveness in representation could be achieved by having up to 7 members participating in the *bureaux*, no consensus was reached on a given number. In the light of recent developments observed in some of the Technical Committees, it was deemed appropriate that each Committee should determine the

composition of its own *bureau* based on specific requirements. In so doing, due consideration should be given both to containing the incremental costs involved, as well as the additional workload for Members attending *bureau* meetings.

17. Concerning the *role of bureaux*, there was broad agreement on the following support and facilitation functions: (i) setting of the agendas for future sessions, in consultation with Regional Groups; (ii) information sharing on new developments during inter-sessional periods, and on possible follow-up actions. The OEWG noted in this context that the CCLM had recommended the addition of a generic reference to bureau functions, such as “ensuring preparations for the sessions”, to the Rules of Procedure of the Technical Committees, while considering that a more detailed description of such functions might not be required in view of their dynamic nature.

18. On the *timing of bureau election*, the OEWG supported the emerging trend of having the elections take place at the end of sessions, which was consistent with the expected proactive role of *bureaux* between sessions.

2. Duration and format of COAG and CCP sessions

19. The OEWG recalled that, while the sessions of the Committees on Fisheries and Forestry normally have a duration of five days each, COAG and CCP had been holding back-to-back sessions over a six-day period since 2005. In view of recent concerns expressed by Members regarding the reduced time frames of the sessions of COAG (3,5 days) and CCP (2,5 days), the OEWG welcomed the consultations held in December 2010 by the ICC with the Chairpersons of COAG and CCP to seek new arrangements for the next cycle of sessions. It appreciated the presentations of the proposals made in this respect by the Chairperson of COAG and by the Secretary of CCP on behalf of the Chairperson of CCP at its meeting of February 2011.

20. Accordingly, the OEWG was generally of the view that the length and intricacy of the agendas of the two Committees could justify an increase in duration of their sessions. While it was stressed that all Committees should be mindful of the need to maximize effectiveness and avoid duplication in their deliberations, the proposed minor extensions in the duration of sessions for both COAG (one day) and CCP (half a day) were generally deemed justified and were therefore endorsed. This would allow, in particular, sufficient time for more in-depth discussion of priority areas of work, while reducing pressure on delegates to deal with important items during meetings after normal working hours.

21. It was also agreed that COAG and CCP sessions should continue to be held back-to-back, but over two consecutive weeks rather than within the same week as had been the case in recent biennia.

22. In April 2011 the Council endorsed the recommendations regarding the duration and format of the sessions, whereby COAG would be extended by one day and CCP by a half day over two consecutive weeks, while maximizing effectiveness and avoiding duplication in their deliberations⁴.

3. Timeliness and accuracy of Governing Body documents

23. The OEWG addressed this issue based on proposals from the North America Regional Group. It supported proposals relating specifically to the *timing and accuracy of documentation for Governing Body meetings*. These included a transparent system for measuring and reporting on document preparation for Conference, Council and other Governing Bodies. The agreed proposals, which were endorsed by Council⁵, are reproduced in Appendix 2.

24. The baseline for dispatch of documentation in all languages should be between two and four weeks ahead of the meetings. At the start of the relevant session, the Secretariat would provide a brief report summarizing any delay in issuing documents. In addition, actions expected of Members would be more clearly defined in the documents, e.g. for those marked “*for decision*”, the specific decision(s) expected from Members would be spelled out in a box.

⁴ CL 141/REP, para. 32.

⁵ CL 140/REP, para. 79.

4. *Modern technologies for Governing Body sessions and inter-sessional work*

25. The OEWG appreciated the initial presentation by the Representative of Australia, on behalf of the South West Pacific Regional Group, of possible avenues of application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in support of Governing Bodies. The OEWG agreed that there was merit in pursuing improvements in working methods based on the suggestions made, bearing in mind important considerations such as:

- the need to take account of differing capacities of access to, and use of, ICTs in all Member Nations;
- ensuring full transparency while safeguarding secrecy or confidentiality, when required;
- backing any proposals with adequate cost-benefit analysis;
- taking a progressive approach, preferably to all-embracing initiatives.

26. Reviewing a document subsequently prepared by the Secretariat on this matter, the OEWG noted that useful applications already in place included: (i) online regular communication through the Permanent Representatives Website; and (ii) digital recording of Conference and Council proceedings. In terms of further expansion of modern technologies, the OEWG considered the following potential applications during and between Governing Body sessions.

27. In-session:

- regular use of video-conference systems, e.g. to enable eminent speakers or FAO field staff to participate at minimal cost;
- Internet streaming of the proceedings of key meetings to ensure wider awareness in Member Nations;
- extension of digital recording to Governing Body sessions other than those of Council and Conference;
- introduction of an electronic voting system in large meeting rooms (Plenary Hall, Green and Red Rooms);
- automated queuing system for requesting the floor.

28. Between sessions:

- facilitated preparations of Governing Body sessions through restricted, and moderated, online fora;
- informal online surveys to seek Members' views on specific issues;
- between-session electronic clearance for non controversial matters;
- expansion of video-conferencing on matters of interest to Members throughout the decentralized offices network.

29. The OEWG received clarifications on some of the tools being considered, including the expected recurrent and investment costs involved, alongside the potential savings that could be generated through their use. For example, it was noted that savings could arise from increased recourse to video-conferencing. Cost implications, as estimated, are presented in Appendix 3, which also covers costs involved in relation to other measures addressed above.

30. Specifically, it was deemed important to ensure the required levels of confidentiality and accuracy of the proposed electronic voting system before deciding to proceed with its implementation. In addition, the Chairperson requested the Secretariat to ascertain the technical feasibility of terminating lengthy interventions made during Governing Body sessions by cutting off the speaker's microphone once the time-limit had been exceeded.

31. In more general terms, the OEWG expressed interest in seeing progress achieved along the lines suggested in the document. There was general agreement that the Secretariat could go forward in implementing the tools which appeared the least costly and the easiest to put in place for the benefit of Members.

32. As the proposed recourse to online fora to facilitate the preparation of Governing Body sessions would entail relatively higher costs, a more in-depth technical and financial analysis would be required to provide a basis for an informed decision by Members in due time.

33. In April 2011 the Council endorsed the recommendations made by the OEWG on modern technologies for Governing Body sessions and inter-sessional work⁶.

5. *Revision of the Note on the methods of work of the Council*

34. In addition to the advice provided by the CCLM and Council, the OEWG contributed specific amendments during the process of revision of the *Note on the methods of work of the Council*. This document, which had been made available at each session of Council since 1973, required adjustments and updating to match the revised role, functions, practices and ways of working of the Council set out in the IPA and reflected in amendments to the Basic Texts adopted by the Conference in 2009.

35. The OEWG considered in particular that the revised Note should: (i) describe the Council functions in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Basic Texts; (ii) foresee membership engagement and interaction in the work of Council, with the ICC performing an enhanced facilitation role in the process; (iii) foresee membership involvement in inter-sessional work, including agenda setting; (iv) include details of standard formats for meeting documents; and (v) provide information on voting arrangements.

36. The final text of the revised *Note on the methods of work of the Council*, incorporating all the changes and additions agreed by the OEWG throughout the process, was submitted to the Council in April 2011, which approved it⁷.

6. *Arrangements for the preparation of reports*

37. In examining various items on its agenda, especially in connection with the working methods of Council and Technical Committees, the OEWG addressed the arrangements for the preparation of meeting reports as a cross-cutting issue. Discussions revolved mostly around the respective merits of the use of *Rapporteurs* versus the established practice of Drafting Committees, and eventually no clear consensus emerged on the most desirable formula.

38. An alternative option was also suggested in the form of a “validation group”, in lieu of the Drafting Committee, which would assess whether the draft report of a meeting accurately reflected the conclusions, decisions and recommendations emerging from the debates, as summarized by the Chairperson.

39. It was stressed that any option should respect the need to enable Members to participate in decision making in the FAO languages. Beyond the practical arrangement for the preparation of draft reports, it was considered that the prime focus of their substance should be on the agreed decisions and recommendations.

7. *Assessment of the governance reforms*

40. During the review of the OEWG progress report by Council in April 2011, it was pointed out that an assessment by the Conference of the workings of the governance reforms, including the role and functioning of the Regional Conferences, with an independent review as an input to this process, was called for by IPA action 2.74. It was noted that this action is due for completion by 2015, in view of which preparatory work should be carried out in the course of the 2012-13 biennium.

⁶ CL 141/REP, para. 31.

⁷ CL 141/REP, para. 51.

Appendix 1**Arrangements for the Open-ended Working Group on Measures Designed to Increase the Efficiency of Governing Bodies, Including Representation*****Membership***

1. Membership of the OEWG shall be open to all Members of FAO.
2. The membership of the Bureau of the OEWG shall be as follows:
 - Chairperson: Mr Luc Guyau, Independent Chairperson of Council
 - Vice-Chairpersons:
 - Ambassador Agnes van Ardenne-van der Hoeven (Netherlands)
 - Ambassador Wilfred Joseph Ngirwa (Tanzania)
 - Members:
 - from Africa: Eritrea
 - from Asia: China
 - from Europe: Spain
 - from Latin America and the Caribbean: Brazil
 - from Near East: Afghanistan
 - from North America: Canada
 - from South-West Pacific: Australia.

Functions

3. The OEWG shall review and make recommendations regarding measures designed to increase the efficiency of the Governing Bodies, including representation.
4. In this context, the OEWG shall examine, *inter alia*, the membership of the Council and may recommend changes in the number of Council seats.

Methods of Work

5. In the course of the 2010-11 biennium, the OEWG shall meet as and when required.
6. The meetings of the OEWG shall be called by the Chairperson, in consultation with the Secretariat.

Reporting

7. Progress reports on the work of the OEWG shall be presented to regular sessions of the Council in 2010 and 2011, and a final report shall be submitted to the Conference in 2011.

Funding

8. A budget allocation shall be provided for the work of the OEWG, to cover *inter alia* costs for documentation, interpretation and translation.

Appendix 2**Agreed proposals on timing and accuracy of documentation for Governing Body meetings**

1. The FAO Secretariat should use a transparent and predictable system for measuring and reporting on delivery of documents for Conference, Council and other Governing Body meetings. The baseline for preparation of documents should be between two and four weeks ahead of such meetings, including translation in official languages, posted on the Website.
2. At the start of relevant Governing Body sessions, the Secretariat should provide a brief (not to exceed 5 minutes) report summarizing the documentation preparation process, and make mention of the number of papers issued/available within the expected timeframe. These reports could be used over time as a basis for comparison in subsequent sessions to determine any variance in performance. Such statistics would also include information relevant to translations.
3. As regards the “accuracy” of final documentation such as reports, any attempt to modify texts from the floor during adoption should be done with the assistance of computer technology, on a screen visible to the entire plenary. Any changes accepted by the membership should be communicated as soon as possible in writing to Members.
4. The efficiency of Governing Body meetings would be enhanced by consistent arrangements whereby the decisions expected of Members are clearly defined in pre-session documents. If a paper is for “Information Only,” there may be no need for substantive discussion unless specifically requested by Members. If marked “For Debate,” a paper could be reviewed, staff questioned on its contents, and recommendations made by Members. If “For Decision,” a paper should clearly spell out up front what specific decision is being asked of Members. Whatever the format eventually agreed, it should be used consistently and accurately for all future sessions.
5. Governing Body documents of a less substantive nature should not necessarily pass through the Office of the Director-General for review.

Appendix 3

Incremental cost estimates for efficiency measures discussed in the OEWG

			Biennial recurrent costs (USD)	One-time costs (USD)
Chairperson's proposal for a more representative and more effective Council	Increase in Council seats from 49 to 56		175,000	
	Council Bureau		100,000	
Modern technologies for Governing Body sessions and inter-sessional work	In-session	Video-conferencing	Marginal incremental costs (USD 40-60/hour)	
		Internet streaming	No incremental cost	
		Extension of digital recording		100,000
		Electronic voting system		40,000
		Automated queuing system for requesting the floor		5,000
	Inter-sessional	Restricted online for a	160,000	100,000
		Informal online surveys		5,000
		Out-of-session electronic clearance		5,000
		Video-conferences between HQ and regional, sub-regional and country offices	Marginal incremental costs (USD 40-60/ hour)	
		Access to rules, policies and procedures	No incremental cost	
		Access to senior management profiles	No incremental cost	
Working arrangements for Technical Committees	Bureau meetings (CCP, COAG, COFI and COFO)		120,000-240,000	
Extended sessions of CCP and COAG	CCP		10,500	
	COAG		25,000	