

February 2013

	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	Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Hundred and Thirteenth Session
Rome, 18 to 22 March 2013
Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Europe and Central Asia
MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

A. General response

1. FAO management welcomes this Evaluation, which assesses the performance of the Regional Office for Europe (REU) and the Subregional Office for Central Asia (SEC) in servicing countries in the region and proposing practical recommendations for strengthening their effectiveness.
2. Management endorses the Evaluation process and methodology and appreciates its forward-looking approach in focusing on the impacts of the ongoing reform at decentralized offices level. The Evaluation, starting in early 2012, was carried out at a time of important discussions and transformational changes in FAO's approach to decentralization, thus providing in-depth evidence and input to the process insofar as it impacted the region.
3. This Management Response was prepared under the leadership of the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia, in close collaboration with many other concerned units.
4. The Evaluation Report contains eight high-level recommendations and 22 sub-recommendations. Management accepts 14 of the 22 sub-recommendations, partially accepts four, and does not accept four sub-recommendations.

B. Context and highlights of the Evaluation

5. The Evaluation provides a constructive vision on how the Organization could further strengthen its decentralized operations in the Europe and Central Asia region, which is supported. While Management agrees with the main Evaluation findings and recommendations, implementation will be conditioned by ongoing transformational changes, including the reviewed Strategic Framework and new Medium Term Plan and Programme of Work and Budget from 2014.

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6. The Evaluation confirmed the efforts made by the Organization to better support member countries in the region in recent years, including the establishment of SEC, the increase in Regular Programme resources to all decentralized offices in the region, and the use of TCP to compensate for the lack of voluntary funding of FAO activities in some countries. The Evaluation, however, concludes that the decentralization process is still work-in-progress and recognizes the complex environment within the region, characterized by the considerable diversity of the countries with respect to their food security, rural poverty and economic situations. The situation is also complicated by several countries in transition, creating a “moving target” for FAO’s intervention. The Evaluation did recognize the good work started in early 2012 with the process of transformational changes, however, the programme of work is conditioned by the limited resources available at country level – the region is only now in the process of establishing two fully-fledged representations, with the other countries served by Assistant FAO Representatives (AFAORs) or national correspondent government staff. Moreover, the decentralization policy was only adopted at the 144th Council when the evaluation had just started.¹

7. Management considers that these findings confirm the relevance of FAO’s recently adopted decentralization policy and its three main pillars: (i) improved prioritization, (ii) improved performance of the decentralized offices network, and (iii) integrated model for programme delivery (i.e. integration of emergency and development) operations.

8. Management welcomes the fact that the Evaluation has duly considered the actions undertaken so far by the Organization and endorsed those under implementation, notably the decentralization of oversight of the FAOR network, TCP, greater delegation of administrative authority, the elaboration of a Regional Priority Framework and Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) and the allocation of additional resources for subregional and country offices.

C. Implementation challenges

9. Follow-up to this Evaluation will require action at three levels: a) many of the recommendations will have to be addressed by FAO’s regional, subregional and country offices in the region, in collaboration with headquarters units; b) the implementation of some recommendations is contingent on the corporate enabling environment for decentralization being put in place through transformational changes; and c) the regional membership will need to guide the Organization on governance issues which remain open and require attention, such as the roles of, and inter-relationship between the European Regional Conference (ERC), the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) and the European Regional Group (ERG) and the scheduling of their respective agendas and meetings.

10. With regard to actions at the regional level, including those to be pursued in consultation with headquarters units, they have been assigned a 2013 timeframe, in some cases subject to additional resources being available. Actions regarding governance need to be discussed by the regional membership who will ultimately take a decision on them, with FAO’s support and advice to the process, as required.

11. It is evident that the network of country offices is currently spread too thinly in the region, with the Organization using suboptimal forms of country presence such as the National Correspondent Scheme. While acknowledging its inadequacy, there is currently no better alternative. Any further expansion of country coverage in the Europe and Central Asia region, would require the allocation of additional resources. Negotiations are currently ongoing with some middle-income member countries on the establishment of FAO presence based on the necessary contributions by the host country.

12. Recommendation 4 deals with Host Country Agreements and places strong importance in having standard basic agreements in place for any FAO operations to take place in country. Clearly, such a situation is advocated by FAO as the best solution to ensure the privileges and immunities for staff and the safeguarding of operations. Such agreements are in the end up to individual member countries to grant. This Evaluation however, is an encouragement for management to continue the

¹ CL 144/REP paragraphs 17-22

progressive review of Host Country Agreements assuming that Member States will also facilitate standard agreements, where possible.

D. Proposed follow-up actions

13. Management considers that success in the implementation of the recommendations made by this Evaluation depends on the synergy with the transformational change processes and the willingness and engagement of member countries to prioritize their collaboration with FAO. Many of the Evaluation's recommendations are interdependent and can only be dealt with in an integrated manner (e.g. strengthened country presence, further delegations of authority in a more decentralized environment). Therefore, management is fully committed to pursuing those changes that will result in more focused FAO programmes, in a better performing decentralized offices network where there is due synergy and complementarity between emergency and development programmes.

14. In view of the above, Management proposes the following approach to organizing the follow-up to this Evaluation:

- a) short-term measures stemming from approved decisions of governing bodies and which can be accommodated within the PWB 2012-13, such as the filling of the REU Regional Gender Officer post, pursue increased delegations of authority for FAORs and seek a viable alternative to the National Correspondent Scheme (the comprehensive list of proposed actions is indicated in the response matrix below);
- b) longer-term governance issues (e.g. finding a more efficient and cost-effective way to replace the Working Party on Women; and finalizing the rules and procedures for the ERC) to be submitted to the 2014 Regional Conference.

15. Management believes that the recommendations of the Evaluation provide a good basis for defining a consensual agenda for change for FAO's work in the Europe and Central Asia region. Such agenda can only be successfully addressed if it is widely understood and supported by FAO's membership in that region. It is therefore suggested that progress on the plan be reviewed by the ERC in early 2014 so that the concerned countries remain fully informed and can provide their guidance on the change process.

Management response matrix to the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Europe and Central Asia

Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p>Recommendation 1: To FAO and REU, on the Governance institutions for the Europe and Central Asia region</p> <p>REU as the Secretariat for both the ERC and ECA should, in collaboration with the Member Countries, finalize the Rules of Procedure for the FAO Regional Conference for Europe to be submitted at its 29th session in 2014, as per the above suggestions;</p> <p>Independently from the contents of the Rules of Procedures, the following should be implemented:</p> <p>a) summary reports from the regional technical commissions should become a permanent standing item on the ERC agenda;</p> <p>b) the ERC Secretariat should play a greater role in identifying the priorities for the Region and its sub-regions.</p>	<p>Accepted. Governance issues are under the remit of regional Member States, supported by the Secretariat. The European Regional Group (ERG) has already initiated such a discussion which be supported by the Secretariat as needed.</p>	Table these issues in ERG and the ECA.	REU/ECA Ex Com/ERG	up to Apr. 2014	N
<p>Recommendation 2: To REU, SEC and ESW, on advocacy for gender equality in the Governance institutions for the Europe and Central Asia Region</p> <p>REU, SEC and ESW, based on in-depth analysis of the evidence available and further dialogue with all concerned parties, should prepare a proposal to be submitted to the 2014 ERC on the most cost-effective way forward to ensure that gender and social inclusion perspectives are fully</p>	<p>Accepted. It is evident that work in the region should, in addition to gender, also begin to incorporate social inclusion perspectives. It will be proposed to Member States that 'rural gender and social inclusion' be a permanent item on the ERC agenda.</p>	Submit a proposal to the 2014 ERC on the most efficient and cost-effective way to replace the Working Party on Women (WPW) with another more effective mechanism to ensure gender perspectives are fully mainstreamed into FAO's work in the Region. Fill the Regional Gender Officer position.	REU	Up to Apr. 2014	N

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<p>mainstreamed into FAO's work in the Region. Independently from the contents of the proposal, progress made in mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in the work of the Organization in the Region should become a permanent standing item in the ERC agenda.</p> <p>Recommendation 3: To FAO, on its presence at country level in Europe and Central Asia</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends the following:</p> <p>a) a non-resident FAO Representative to be appointed with multiple-accreditation to Armenia and Georgia; the Assistant FAO Representatives at country level should be delegated enough authority to manage the whole programme, represent FAO within the UN, make decisions or facilitate rapid decision-making;</p> <p>b) a non-resident FAO Representative be appointed with multiple-accreditation to Albania and the Republic of Moldova, following one of the modalities suggested above;</p> <p>c) in the Region, the National Correspondent Scheme should be discontinued and FAO should not engage in operational activities at country level without, as a minimum, an AFAORep within a multiple-accredited FAO Representation or a senior officer embedded in the UNRC Office.</p> <p>d) The foreseen Programme and Partnership Development posts at country level can be effective if staffed at an appropriate level of seniority (minimum P4);</p> <p>e) The newly created post in REU for Partnership</p>					
	<p>(a) and (b) Accepted. The Deputy RR/REU is, since November 2012, the non-resident FAO Representative in Georgia, Armenia and Moldova with P-5/P-4 REU officers assigned as alternate FAO Representatives to assist. Management agrees in principle that country coverage arrangements proposed by the Evaluation would improve FAO's delivery capacity in the countries concerned. However, prevailing resource constraints make it difficult to implement these measures. To the extent possible, AFAORs will be delegated more authority to accelerate decision-making.</p> <p>(c) Partially Accepted. The national correspondent can be modified only once more appropriate arrangements can be put in place, depending on resources. Should FAO discontinue all operations in countries without a minimal level of staff presence, it would limit country activities to the following countries: Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan,</p>	<p>(a) Review delegations to AFAORs with CSF and OHR so as to bring them to a sufficient level of authority to execute programmes in country.</p> <p>(b) Establish a post and appoint a Programme Officer for Albania.</p> <p>(c) Seek viable alternative arrangements for in-country presence to replace the National Correspondents.</p>	<p>REU/OSD/ CSF/OHR/CSP</p>	<p>End 2013</p>	<p>N Y Y Y N</p>

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Development officer should work in close coordination with LOB, to support the development of a stronger partnership between REU and the EU institutions for the Europe and Central Asia Region.	Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Albania (after establishment of AFAOR). Operations in Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Ukraine, Macedonia and Russia would need to be cancelled, and no operations would be approved for Turkmenistan.				
	(d) Accepted. Negotiations are ongoing with countries concerned on the necessary cost-sharing arrangements.	(d) Follow-up with OSD and OCP.			
	(e) Accepted.	(e) Fill the position.			
Recommendation 4: To LEG, OSD, REU and SEC, on Host Country Agreements The Evaluation recommends that the status of FAO accreditation in all countries in Europe and Central Asia where the Organization carries out field operations, be reviewed to ensure that it can benefit from the relevant immunities and privileges. In so doing, FAO should take into account the experience of other UN agencies in each specific case and should not initiate activities in a country unless the standard basic agreement or equivalent has been signed with the Government.	Partially Accepted. The possibility of enjoying a comprehensive regime of privileges and immunities through standard basic agreements (SBAs) is primarily a matter for the Members, not for FAO. In Europe and Central Asia, FAO and other specialized agencies have had difficulties in negotiating acceptable SBAs with some Members. In some cases, Members of this region have refused to apply existing SBAs with the UN to FAO and other agencies. In general, Members have become less inclined to grant such privileges and this has adversely affected some activities. This also concerns the United Nations, despite its stronger leverage in negotiations. The overall objective of seeking to conclude SBAs could still be pursued by FAO,	Whenever existing arrangements are inadequate and following a selective approach, FAO could seek to negotiate SBAs. As an alternative it could be possible to conclude suitable project agreements providing for the necessary guarantees.	OSD/REU/LEG	2013	Y

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	subject to a requirement of selectivity, on a case-by-case basis. Criteria for selectivity would include the importance, volume and nature of FAO's activities, as well as the views of concerned host countries.				
<p>Recommendation 5: To CSH/OHR, REU, SEC and SSC, on Manual Section 375 and Non Staff Human Resources contractual conditions</p> <p>CSH, REU, SEC and SSC should undertake a comprehensive analysis of the adequacy of the system of NSHR contractual arrangements in general and as applied in the country offices of the region, analyzing conditions and procedures and improving the quality of information and communication. This approach should contribute to an overall review of the NPP modality, including its coverage by MS 375.</p>	<p>Accepted. While FAO generally follows ICSC standards with regard to NSHR contractual arrangements, some UN organizations operate in a more flexible manner, especially with regard to National Project Personnel (NPP). For example, the requirement applied by FAO for NPPs to break from service for a minimum of six months following the end of one project before they can be considered for another project, is not followed by several other agencies.</p>	Review contractual arrangements to increase flexibility. Update of post descriptions for all posts in the region. Establish learning modules that develop the capacity of staff in decentralized offices in administration, office and staff management.	OHR in collaboration with LEG, OSD and decentralized offices	2013	N
<p>Recommendation 6: To CSH/OHR, LEG, OSD, REU and SEC, on delegation of authority</p> <p>FAO should revise, in the Europe and Central Asia Region, the delegation of authority to countries without a fully fledged FAO Representation. This should include:</p> <p>a) revise terms of reference, roles and responsibilities that allow national staff to operate GRMS to its full potential, under the adequate supervision of the multiple-accredited FAO Representative;</p>	<p>Partially Accepted. For fiduciary reasons, the Organization can only delegate financial authority in situations where due separation of duties and other minimal administrative controls exist. Management is looking into the feasibility of further delegating administrative responsibilities to National Professional Officers, also in the context of the new GRMS.</p>	Review financial delegations to national officers and develop policy.	CSF/CSP	2013	Y (training)

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<p>b) enable staff at country level through capacity development packages that will allow them to operate GRMS safely;</p> <p>c) ensure that AOS reimbursements accrue to the closest organizational level to where the field programme is actually implemented;</p> <p>d) open imprest accounts, to permit offices to perform financial/operational functions. FAO staff, recruited at the appropriate level, whether national or international, should be granted full authority for managing these instruments. The present system, implying the use of cash, should be discontinued, except for proven emergencies.</p> <p>Recommendation 7: To FAO and REU, on the use of the Russian language</p> <p>In order to enhance the quality of its technical work and the diffusion of its normative products FAO should:</p> <p>a) in recruitment: give priority to the best technical competence in countries, essentially in Central Asia, where Russian rather than English is the FAO working language, and invest in translation costs for reports and administration forms. Fluency in Russian should be considered an advantage in selecting international staff to work in these countries;</p> <p>b) invest in translation of publications and other normative products into Russian.</p>					
<p>(a) Partially Accepted. Technical competence is always the highest criteria for selection. Russian language skills are a highly desirable qualification, while incumbents should also have working level knowledge of English to facilitate global mobility within the Organization.</p> <p>(b) Accepted.</p>	<p>Ensure Russian language is given more prominence in the selection of staff in the region. Target sources and identify good candidates for positions with the best technical competence and required language skills.</p> <p>Supplement the list of documents available in Russian language.</p>	REU/CSP	Ongoing	Y (translation)	

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<p>Recommendation 8: To FAO, on enhancing the One-FAO approach</p> <p>FAO, REU and SEC should invest in developing stronger ties, communication and coordination among Technical Departments and staff in the DOs. Ways to achieve this should include:</p> <p>a) Annual meetings should be convened for FAO staff, similar to the Land and Water Days in the Land and Water Division, to maintain and strengthen technical links between the officers posted in the decentralized offices and in HQ.</p> <p>b) Shared supervisors between HQ and DO in the PEMS agreement of all technical officers in the DOs;</p> <p>c) Shared supervisors between HQ and DO in the PEMS agreements of technical officers in HQ working extensively in the Region;</p> <p>d) Establish a communication and information sharing platform in all Technical Departments on the model of AGP;</p> <p>e) Establish a minimum of one-month induction period in HQ for newly recruited technical officers in any DO in the Region.</p>	<p>(a), (d), (e) Accepted. Management is currently reviewing existing networking arrangements and will introduce technical networks together with the revised internal governance arrangements for the reviewed Strategic Framework and MTP 2014-2017.</p> <p>(b), (c) Partially accepted. Each officer should have only one supervisor, lest accountability is fragmented. It is suggested that decentralized technical officers include their headquarters peers as multitrainers in their PEMS and vice versa.</p>	Implement the policy for technical networks.	Technical departments/ OSD/CSP	Ongoing	N
		Encourage decentralized technical officers to include always one officer in the parent technical division as multitrainer in their PEMS process.			