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Report by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) of the regional synthesis of lessons learned from, and trends identified in the country programme evaluations: in Asia and the Pacific 2014-2019

Executive Summary

This synthesis presents results of FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) evaluations completed between 2014 and 2019 for the Asia and the Pacific region, analysing FAO's contribution, issues and lessons learned to inform decisions on future priorities and actions in the region.

The Regional Initiative on Zero Hunger Initiative (RI-ZH) and the interrelated subthemes, food security and nutrition, nutrition-sensitive value chains and food safety, were identified as most important to address the needs and priorities in the region, hence they were proposed as the key focus of the synthesis.

In the Asia and the Pacific region, an estimated 959 million people experience food insecurity, as reported in 2019. Further, more than half of the world's malnourished children live in the region, while progress to reduce hunger and malnutrition has stagnated for all subregions. The Asia and the Pacific region are also home to the fastest growing prevalence of overweight and obesity in the world.

The RI-ZH supports countries in the region to create an enabling environment for ecologically viable, nutrition-sensitive and climate smart agriculture and food systems. Regional activities under the RI-ZH included consultations, ministerial round table meetings, and conferences such as the "Accelerating efforts to end hunger and malnutrition" conference organized by FAO in cooperation with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which supported policy developments and strengthened intersectoral approaches to address the objectives.

Main findings

Results achieved: FAO was successful in facilitating and coordinating a policy dialogue, increasing awareness, and creating high-level political attention to the common goal of eradicating hunger and malnutrition as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda. FAO's knowledge products, guidelines and assessment tools are well recognized, appreciated and frequently applied. FAO successfully engaged with partner institutions at the regional as well as country level and strengthened partnerships particularly with the agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors. Attention to

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non-traditional partners, such as the private sector, has increased, yet, requires a greater effort. The development of regulations and the implementation of food safety, quality and hygiene standards was successful and highly relevant to the food safety issues and trade potential in the region.

Enabling factors: Factors that enabled FAO to contribute effectively to country-level processes were access to global partnership arrangements and associated strategic frameworks, plus the availability of normative and technical guidelines and knowledge products. Availability and continuity of staff, as well as access to the regional or headquarters expert pool, was another important factor that helped FAO's Country Offices achieve results.

Constraining factors: FAO's effectiveness was seriously constrained by the limited financial and human resource capacity available for food- and nutrition-related matters. In addition, a lack of context-specific, evidence-based information impaired FAO's ability to influence policies, design effective interventions and track progress at the national level.

Gaps: The evaluations concluded that FAO was weak in implementing actionable programmes resulting in measurable impacts on reducing hunger and malnutrition. Interventions were often restricted to pilot basis, or of relatively short duration and limited coverage, which meant they did not achieve the intended results. Value chain developments supported by FAO do not yet show any sizeable added value. Exit strategies are required to ensure a smooth continuation of efforts beyond FAO's involvement in programmes, but were often not in place. Further, systematic monitoring and evaluation systems were rarely established within FAO projects and programmes, and FAO knowledge management, communication and dissemination were weak.

Emerging issues: Urban food insecurity and malnutrition, together with the double burden of malnutrition, including overweight and obesity, are new challenges emerging in the region.

Conclusions: The RI-ZH addresses the developmental priority needs of the region, through the support of FAO, and eradication of hunger and malnutrition have progressively been set as common goals of regional and country-level frameworks. FAO has established a wide network of partners, it is well recognized as a capacity, information and knowledge provider, and has contributed significantly to the development of its partners' policies and multisectoral plans prioritizing food and nutrition security. Investment in value chain developments have a strong potential to support economic growth and contribute to food security in the region. Urban food security and nutrition, together with issues of overweight and obesity, are emerging issues for the region.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to take note of the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Further attention should be given to the generation of context-specific information, knowledge products and guidelines addressing the countries' and partners' information and knowledge gaps on food security and nutrition. A more systematic approach to the management and sharing of knowledge would enhance FAO's visibility, recognition and confidence of partners to invest in promising approaches. Sharing country lessons within the region or globally could support a transfer of knowledge, create synergies and improve efficiency and effectiveness. Existing platforms could be leveraged for this purpose.

Recommendation 2: Networks with non-traditional partners could be strengthened and would provide an opportunity for a stronger integration of food-based approaches in sectors like health, education or social protection. A more active engagement with private sector entities is an emerging need in the region and would provide opportunities to improve the impact and sustainability of food safety and value chain related investments. Broadening partnerships with research institutions could provide good opportunities to improve nutrition-sensitive policies and service delivery. This is also important in light of addressing emerging needs and finding viable solutions for issues such as the double burden of malnutrition, healthy diets and obesity/overweight, urban food and nutrition security. Given the high-level and multisectoral nature of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and its backing

by key donors, it is an appropriate platform to take an active role leading the dialogue on nutrition-sensitive approaches.

Recommendation 3: Emerging from the results of the evaluations is the need to shift to a new area of emphasis in strengthening food safety systematically across the value chain and strengthen market linkages also by engaging with the private sector. Options for diversifying value chains to improve access to a more diversified diet, and hence, contribute to better nutrition, in particular among vulnerable populations, would require further attention. Closer cooperation between country offices and the regional office as well as headquarters expert teams, could aid learning from good practices to improve design and enhance the impact of food value chains on increasing incomes and availability of safe and nutritious foods that contributes to a diversified diet.

Recommendation 4: FAO should work with partners to identify opportunities to integrate food and nutrition into large-scale agriculture investments. Practical lessons exist from experiences in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Cambodia. FAO's expert pool could support decentralized offices in transferring global lessons into a country context, and hence, support the active integration into actionable programmes. Further, overweight and obesity are recognized as emerging issues for Asia and the Pacific, and require more research and innovative solutions, and urgent actions to reduce the burden.

Recommendation 5: A good monitoring and evaluation system would create opportunities for systematic capitalizing on, and communication of FAO's achievements. A results-based management approach, setting pathways and a logical framework with clear objectives and outcome indicators, should be used to track progress. Future Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) should ensure a strong integration of monitoring and evaluation with all programme activities. Innovative ways to incentivize monitoring and evaluation and to embed monitoring and evaluation into the programme design and implementation arrangements, could strengthen such systems.

Recommendation 6: Exit strategies and implementation plans should be prepared and agreed on at the beginning of every operation. A smooth phase-out requires a strategic approach to build on and expand existing capacities, develop ownership and set milestones for a gradual phase-over of responsibility. Engaging a wide range of partners, clarifying responsibilities, creating replicable examples, and preparing and supporting the application of guidance to implementation, all help to strengthen and sustain efforts beyond the active support phase.

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Introduction

1. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) conducts evaluations to provide accountability of the Organization to member countries, to assess the work towards its Strategic Objectives and to measure its organizational performance. Evaluations provide a basis for programme and strategy setting, contribute to corporate learning and support decisions for improvements.
2. The Programme Committee, an FAO Governing Body, reviews findings, makes recommendations and follows up on the implementation of its recommendations. The Programme Committee, at its 125th Session, invited OED to prepare regional syntheses of lessons learned deriving from evaluations and deliver them to FAO Regional Conferences to be held in early 2020.
3. Although the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) is the primary audience for the synthesis report, FAO's regional and sub-regional office and country offices, as well as FAO's headquarters departments, might also benefit from the report.

Purpose, objectives and scope of regional synthesis

4. The purpose of the regional synthesis is to inform the APRC about results, issues and lessons learned deriving from OED evaluations completed between 2014 and 2019, and thus, inform decisions on future priorities and actions. The regional synthesis is part of a broader objective of enhancing the usefulness and utilization of evaluations by Members of the governing bodies, in particular, at the regional level.
5. The regional synthesis for the Asia and the Pacific region addresses the following questions:
 - a. Results achieved through FAO support: What are the main results, in the regional priorities/thematic areas that have been achieved through FAO support to the region and countries within the region?
 - b. Emerging issues and gaps: What issues and gaps emerge from the evaluations, which require attention/consideration by the FAO Regional Conference?
 - c. Lessons to be learned: What lessons can be learned from evaluations that can inform FAO's future programming/actions in the region?

Methodology

6. Regional conference documents were reviewed to identify regional initiatives and priorities addressing regional challenges. Evaluation reports were also screened to identify evaluations addressing the regional priorities. The criteria applied for selection of evaluations were i) topics identified as priority by the recent regional conferences and relevant to FAO's Strategic Objectives (SOs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); ii) a maximum of 3-4 topics per region and at least 3-4 evaluations available per topic.
7. Reviewing the needs and priorities in the region, the Zero Hunger Challenge (ZHC) was identified as the most dominant one and therefore proposed for the synthesis presented here.
8. In total, 61 evaluation reports were screened for their relevance to address the ZHC. This included country programme evaluations (CPEs), country project evaluations, global project evaluations and thematic evaluations with relevance to region. A selection of 22 evaluation reports were identified as relevant and were included in the analysis.
9. The Regional Initiative on Zero Hunger (RI-ZH) and associated and interrelated subthemes of food security and nutrition, nutrition-sensitive value chains and food safety were selected for the synthesis. In this regard, the synthesis presents FAO's work at the policy and implementation level, partnerships, knowledge and normative work as well as programme management elements.

Table 1: Evaluation reports reviewed and included into the analysis

Evaluations	Available/Reviewed	Included and analysed
Thematic/strategic	18	8
Global projects	19	3
Projects in the Asia and Pacific region	17	4
CPE	7	7
Total	61	22

Limitations

10. The evaluations reviewed were conducted between 2014 and 2019 assessing projects of which some had started prior to 2014. Hence, findings reflect upon the past, rather than providing an up-to-date status or current status of achievements. Due to time constraints, interviews complementing the evaluation results were not conducted.

11. Thematic priorities for the region were not consistently evaluated. The diversity of evaluation themes and absence of quantitative data makes it difficult to synthesize, to compare and to present hard facts on progress and achievements set for the countries and the region as a whole.

12. It should further be noted that the synthesis presented here is based on evaluations conducted and does not represent the full picture of FAO's contribution to the reduction of hunger and malnutrition in Asia and the Pacific. For instance, in-depth evaluations of FAO's Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) were done in seven out of the 36 countries with FAO interventions.

Structure of the report

13. The report is structured around four chapters. Chapter 1 presents the purpose, objectives, scope and methodology. Chapter 2 summarizes the regional context as presented by the regional overview of food security and nutrition, the regional structure, priorities and FAO's work under the RI-ZH. Chapter 3 presents the findings, responding to the key questions. Finally, Chapter 4 presents the main conclusions and recommendations.

Regional Context

State of food security and nutrition in the region

14. Progress to reduce hunger and malnutrition has stagnated for all subregions in Asia and Pacific, with some 486 million people being undernourished and 959 million people experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity. More than half of the world's malnourished children live in Asia and the Pacific. In 2018, stunting rates exceeded 20 percent in the majority of the region's countries.¹

15. The Asia and the Pacific region is also home to the fastest growing prevalence of obesity in the world, attributed to a transition in diets and lifestyle. This is not just a problem in urban or industrialized population groups, but also among rural communities where hunger and obesity exist side by side, in the same communities and even within the same households. Urban food insecurity and malnutrition is another challenge emerging in the region, partly due to the migration of poorer families to urban areas.²

16. The root causes of hunger and malnutrition are multidimensional. Poor access or poorly performing social services, poor economic access and water scarcity, and gender inequality across all

¹ FAO. 2019. *Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition: Placing Nutrition at the Centre of Social Protection*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6481e.pdf>. FAO. 2018. *Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition: Accelerating progress towards the SDGs*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA0950EN/CA0950EN.pdf>.

² FAO. 2018. *Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition: Accelerating progress towards the SDGs*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA0950EN/CA0950EN.pdf>.

dimensions, are among the most common root causes. Volatility of food markets and fluctuations in food prices impact the quality of diets. Furthermore, Asia and Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world.³ Incidences of climate-related disasters have been rising as well.⁴

17. Across Asia and the Pacific, women's contribution to agriculture is essential, comprising up to 50 percent of the agricultural labour force in East and Southeast Asia and around 30 percent in South Asia; across the region, agriculture is the prime employment for women. In South Asia, up to 70 percent of all working women gain their income through agriculture activities.

18. Although economic growth continues in the region, not everyone is benefiting from the gains. Income and social inequalities increased over the last 25 years, undermining positive developments.⁵

Regional structures

19. FAO has 41 member countries in the Asia and the Pacific region. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) is based in Bangkok, Thailand. A Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP) is located in Apia, Samoa. FAO also has dedicated Representatives in 15 countries and a Liaison Office in Japan (LOJ).⁶ Besides providing strategic direction, advocating, liaising, coordinating and sharing knowledge, RAP backstops more than 300 projects on nutrition, agriculture, water, forestry, livestock, fisheries and climate change (FAO. RAP webpage. 2019).

20. Five regional commissions, including the Commission on Agricultural Statistics, Animal Production and Health Commission, Fishery, Forestry and Plant Protection, exist, giving legitimacy to and ownership over regional products. The commissions set priorities for sectoral work and guide decisions for country-level and regional actions.

21. FAO works closely with regional entities supporting regional integration. Of particular relevance with regard to the food and nutrition agenda is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), with food security one of their most important areas of cooperation. More recently, under the Asia-Pacific United Nations (UN) Development Group, FAO jointly with World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), formed a regional nutrition task force, which aims to foster regional nutrition actions within the context of the UN Reform.

22. Biennial regional conferences are the official platforms for high-level officials of member countries, non-governmental and intergovernmental, national and regional bodies to discuss regional challenges, priorities and future directions and present the Multi-Year Programme of Work.

Regional Priorities

23. FAO's core objectives in the Asia and the Pacific region are to eradicate hunger and poverty and improve livelihoods and nutrition in support of the SDGs. The FAO Regional Initiatives (RIs) serve as an opportunity to strengthen mechanisms to effectively deliver services at country level.⁷ The APRC 2018 proposed continuation of three of the previous RIs: ZHC; Blue Growth; and Value Chains in the Pacific. Two new RIs were added: Climate Change and One Health.⁸ The ZHC was identified as the most dominant and selected for the synthesis presented here.

³ FAO. 2019. *Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition: Placing Nutrition at the Centre of Social Protection*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6481e.pdf>.

⁴ FAO. 2018. *Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition: Accelerating progress towards the SDGs*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA0950EN/CA0950EN.pdf>.

⁵ FAO. 2019. *Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition: Placing Nutrition at the Centre of Social Protection*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6481e.pdf>.

⁶ FAO. 2017. *FAO in Asia and the Pacific, Working to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and poverty*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7725e.pdf>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ FAO. 2018b. *Results and Priorities for FAO activities in the region*. APRC/18/6. Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, 34th session, Nadi – Fiji, 9-13 April.

24. Zero Hunger is the vision of a world free of hunger and malnutrition, in which no one is left behind. The global ZHC was initiated in June 2012; FAO, accordingly formed corresponding strategic objectives. To achieve the zero hunger targets by 2030, Asia and Pacific must lift more than 3 million people out of hunger each and every month.⁹

25. Actions under the RI-ZH in Asia and Pacific: The RI-ZH aims to support countries in the region to create an enabling environment for ecologically viable, nutrition-sensitive and climate smart agriculture and food systems. It has been implemented in Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste, and has further been extended to Cambodia, Fiji, Pakistan, Thailand and Viet Nam (FAO RAP Webpage, 2019).

26. Regional activities under the RI-ZH included consultations and workshops relating to:

- a. improving nutrition policies through intersectoral coordination (ASEAN/FAO);
- b. neglected and underutilized crops and species in Asia;
- c. inception of regional Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP)¹⁰ to create enabling environments for nutrition-sensitive agriculture to address malnutrition;
- d. a ministerial round table on Zero Hunger at the 34th Session of APRC;
- e. expert consultations to strengthen mountain agriculture development, food security and nutrition governance for Zero Hunger.

27. FAO in cooperation with IFPRI, also organized a global event “Accelerating efforts to end hunger and malnutrition”, held in Thailand, sharing data and evidence to identify ‘accelerators’ and lessons to enhance nutrition outcomes.

28. National activities included a symposium on nutrition-sensitive agriculture to improve nutritional outcomes, monitoring of the country action and investment plans, measuring food security; supporting the preparation of the ZHC launch and campaigns, the establishment of the required governance structures (e.g. steering committee, office), implementation of pilot activities, and the preparation of multisectoral action plans and the launch of the Zero Hunger Initiative in Bangladesh, Nepal, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Findings

29. This chapter focuses on FAOs contribution to the ZHC in the Asia and Pacific region. It presents results associated with subthemes of food security and nutrition, nutrition-sensitive value chains and food safety with particular attention to FAO's work at the policy and implementation level, partnerships, knowledge and normative work as well as programme management elements.

Results achieved

Finding 1. FAO's strategic approach was successful in facilitating and coordinating a policy dialogue, streamlining and increasing awareness and high-level political attention to the common goal of eradicating hunger and malnutrition also as part of the SDG agenda.

30. The evaluations reviewed found that FAO successfully advocated and sensitized policy- and decision-makers at the highest political levels and created awareness among partner institutions. As a result, hunger and food security has now been widely recognized and is also understood as a governance issue, rather than as a technical issue only. Furthermore, food and nutrition security has

⁹ FAO. 2019. *Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition: Placing Nutrition at the Centre of Social Protection*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6481e.pdf>

¹⁰ FAO. 2017. Regional Inception Workshop for Regional TCP on Creating Enabling Environments for Nutrition-Sensitive Food and Agriculture to Address Malnutrition under the Regional Initiative on Zero Hunger Challenge. Bangkok, Thailand. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/events/detail-events/en/c/1435/>.

increasingly been recognized as a multisectoral and multistakeholder responsibility rather than just a responsibility of a single sector, such as the health sector.

31. In various countries in the region, FAO facilitated and strengthened mechanisms to coordinate the development of national multisectoral policies, strategies and action plans, and provided the required leadership and expertise to give increased attention to food security, food-based and nutrition-sensitive approaches.

32. The following examples provide evidence supporting the above:

- a. As concluded by the evaluation of FAO's nutrition strategy in 2019, FAO's initial involvement in nutrition-sensitive agriculture and subsequent involvement in "food systems for nutrition" has grown significantly over time for all regions, including Asia and Pacific. FAO has both the mandate and technical strengths and is well positioned, particularly through its close cooperation with government institutions, to take the leadership role in this domain.¹¹
- b. FAO's strength has been recognized by several evaluations conducted in the region. As evident from FAO's CPEs conducted in Cambodia, Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Timor-Leste, FAO's role in fighting hunger and malnutrition through food-based and sustainable approaches is undisputed. As such, the Organization has an excellent track record and is recognized as a strong advocate for food and nutrition security.
- c. In Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan and Timor-Leste, FAO supported the launch of the ZH Initiative at the highest political level, the formulation of declarations and provided technical support to the formulation of National Action Plans addressing the ZHC. It also supported government structures, strengthened networks to coordinate the action plan, and conducted studies to explore opportunities to achieve the zero hunger targets. Furthermore, in Cambodia, FAO was found to be particularly strong in coordinating food and nutrition security matters, coordinating and facilitating working groups, and working closely with the Government, UN sister agencies and other relevant institutions and development partners to ensure nutrition objectives are explicitly embedded in food security and agriculture policies, in addition to ensuring that agricultural interventions are nutrition-sensitive and an integral part of multisectoral nutrition strategies.

33. A risk of inefficiencies:

- a. As presented above, the introduction and promotion of eradication of hunger and malnutrition was perceived as important and supportive to the national processes and development priorities, yet, the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia expressed concern about the proliferation of initiatives, such as Zero Hunger, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) and One World No Hunger, which brought with them the potential risk of inefficiencies due to additional administrative layers and extra reporting lines. The introduction of different terminologies for similar activities also appeared confusing to them.¹²
- b. Using the regional TCP funds, FAO in Bangladesh implemented three projects dedicated to the RI-ZH initiative and its goals. Although it was perceived as a good opportunity, the CPE concluded that the benefits of these initiatives were not as significant as those from national projects due to the small funding allocation and high transaction cost for coordination.¹³

¹¹ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Rome, pp. 119. Paragraph 29. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>

¹² FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>

¹³ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Paragraph 52. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>

34. RAP Country Offices' planning processes and strategic objectives are streamlined and prioritize the eradication of zero hunger and malnutrition. All CPFs formulated after the global launch of the Zero Hunger Initiative (ZHI) and the introduction of a corresponding Strategic Framework prioritized the eradication of hunger and malnutrition as a strategic objective or, for example in Cambodia, even as an overarching goal. In Viet Nam the CPF included assistance for policies and programmes in support of food systems for rural, vulnerable groups.¹⁴ Also, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, one of the RI-ZH focus countries in the region, FAO linked its CPF closely and strategically to the regional ZHI and goals.¹⁵

35. FAO's contribution to contextualise and support countries to set the national SDG agenda showed mixed results across the region. FAO Country Offices hold responsibility to support the process of strategizing and contextualising SDGs at country level and FAO is well positioned to synthesize the findings and recommendations on vulnerabilities and track the status of the SDGs, in particular in view of SDG 2, ZHI and FAO's Contribution to the Eradication of Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition, FAO's SO 1. FAO's Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2018-2021 reflects an explicit integration of the SDGs into FAO's strategic framework, furthermore, all SO evaluations demonstrate the interconnectedness between the SO and the respective SDGs.¹⁶

36. The following examples provide evidence supporting the above:

- a. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, supported by FAO, was the first country in the region to adopt the SDG framework, even two days before it was formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. In 2017, the Government developed a road map for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Similarly, the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia aimed to accelerate efforts to achieve the SDGs, in particular SDG 2, supported by FAO. In Bhutan, SDG 2 was the priority and became an integral part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2014-2018 and its associated results matrix.¹⁷ Similar planning processes and alignments were seen in other countries.¹⁸
- b. This was different in Pakistan. Here, FAO in collaboration with other UN agencies, was proactive in supporting national and subnational SDG consultations at the initial stage, but missed opportunities to participate in later consultations. Missing links between the CPF and the country's SDG targets were also observed in Bangladesh.¹⁹

Finding 2. FAO in RAP has been recognized as a capacity, information and knowledge provider in food security and nutrition related matters. Knowledge products, guidelines and assessment tools are well recognized, appreciated and frequently applied.

37. FAO's extensive knowledge base provides it with a comparative advantage as a knowledge broker and strengthens its convening power. Regional and decentralized offices have the opportunity to capitalize on successful experiences, engage partners, stakeholders and end-users to tailor

¹⁴ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Strategic Objective 4: Enabling Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems, Review of the Implementation of FAO's Strategy for Improving Food Safety Globally*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd712e.pdf>.

¹⁵ FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>

¹⁶ FAO. 2019. *Synthesis of findings and lessons learnt from the Strategic Objective Evaluations*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA3774EN>

¹⁷ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bhutan*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA1565EN/ca1565en.pdf>

¹⁸ FAO Country Programme Evaluations in RAP, 2015-19.

¹⁹ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>. FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Bangladesh*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>

knowledge products and services specifically to the needs and capacities, and hence, generate evidence and support decentralized decision-making.²⁰

38. FAO's global knowledge products are widely recognized and accessed:

- a. The thematic evaluation of FAO's SO 4 - Enabling Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems, found that FAO's greatest strengths were its technical authority and expertise in providing advice on policy, nutrition and value chains, food losses and waste, and food safety with excellent data and normative products.²¹ Nutrition-sensitive agriculture products, guidelines and policy guidance notes, were of high quality having raised the attention of professionals about the role and opportunities of the agriculture sector to strengthen its impact on reducing hunger and malnutrition.²²
- b. The thematic evaluation on FAO's contribution to knowledge on food, nutrition and agriculture, completed in 2015, found an extensive range of topics related to food and agriculture with a wide geographical coverage (global, regional, national, subnational) and purposes (advisory, advocacy, learning, scientific, normative, up to 300-400 first language editions published annually). Flagship publications, such as the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), and the Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition for Asia and Pacific 2016, 2018 and 2019, are of excellent quality and are highly informative regarding the situation and causes of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. These publications set the stage and provide opportunities to set targets and track progress towards common goals such as the Zero Hunger Goal and the 2030 SDG Agenda. Intensifying efforts to fight hunger and malnutrition, FAO had expanded its range of learning resources²³, with many of them also being offered online, addressing global needs and priorities well but being less tailored to the local context. Regional knowledge products were not being evaluated separately, while the global evaluations might overlook regional efforts, if those knowledge products were developed by the decentralized office and not operated through the corporate procedures. Overall, knowledge products were frequently accessed, read and are widely recognized for their technical excellence.²⁴

39. FAO's contribution to knowledge products in RAP: FAO Country Offices' knowledge products were well recognized and of high interest to partners, particularly products on subjects related to nutrition-sensitive approaches.²⁵ Field-tested, technically sound manuals were produced in Bangladesh.²⁶ In Cambodia, FAO TCP funding was used to conduct a number of studies exploring ways to achieve the Zero-Hunger targets. The studies included topics such as value chains and food systems, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, genetic resources and seed policy development, natural resource management addressing zero hunger in the context of climate change, exploring and

²⁰ FAO. 2016. *Final evaluation of the Improved Global Governance for Hunger Reduction Programme (IGGHRP)*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd492e.pdf>.

²¹ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Strategic Objective 4: Enabling Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems, Review of the Implementation of FAO's Strategy for Improving Food Safety Globally*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd712e.pdf>.

²² FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Rome, pp. 119. Paragraph 29. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO Strategic Objective 1: Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition*. Available at:

<http://www.fao.org/3/I9572EN/i9572en.pdf>; FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>.

²³ This list was compiled in 2014: 78 major learning resources, including 57 e-learning, 13 learning materials, 6 face-to-face training events, and 2 blended learnings; FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Knowledge on Food and Agriculture*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd904e.pdf>.

²⁴ FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Knowledge on Food and Agriculture*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd904e.pdf>.

²⁵ FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>

²⁶ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Paragraph 74, Recommendation 5. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>

promoting the nutritional potential of underutilized crops, and exploring new ways to promote school gardens. FAO in Pakistan supported nation-wide assessments, including food and vulnerability assessments or the household-based food and nutrition surveys as inputs to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).²⁷

40. Areas for improvement of knowledge products: Evaluations conducted in 2017 and 2018 also recognized a ‘proliferation’ of knowledge products in recent years which could confuse users and result in competition.²⁸ Evaluations propose a stronger and more consistent involvement of users and potential partners, which could further enhance the relevance to the local context and be more user-oriented. Furthermore, visibility, accessibility and user-friendliness could be improved, especially in terms of language coverage and access at decentralized locations (e.g. connectivity issues). Some knowledge product gaps exist for specialized topics and there is a strong demand for context-relevant knowledge products and services (e.g. social protection, animal health, soil and plant health, the need for knowledge products on the integration of nutrition was mentioned in Cambodia).²⁹

41. FAO supported food and nutrition assessment tools and analysis to generate data for decision-making. FAO is seen as a leading authority and reference organization in the area of international standards setting. FAO plays an important role in monitoring, surveillance and tracking progress towards national, regional and global targets such as the SDGs. The food insecurity experience scale (FIES), prevalence of undernourishment (PoU), the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) and the IPC are of particular priority with regard to food and nutrition security.

42. Tracking SDG2 - food insecurity experience scale (FIES) and PoU: FAO globally, tested and promoted FIES as reliable, cost-effective indicators to identify population groups most affected by food insecurity. FIES is an indicator of household food security, in terms of access to diverse and nutritious food, while the PoU³⁰ expresses national food sufficiency. The PoU was used to track Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and adopted as SDG 2 indicator (2.1.1.). FIES was also adopted as an indicator to track progress on SDG 2 (2.1.2.). The indicators can complement each other for a deeper analysis of national food availability versus household’s access to food. Though initial pilots on the use of FIES were conducted in the Africa region, its application also progressed in Asia and the Pacific. E-learning courses were planned to be available by 2018 and the regional focal point was nominated to support regional offices also in Asia and the Pacific. FIES was integrated into the Indonesian National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS), Malaysia prepared for its integration and the Governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam requested FAO’s support to include FIES in upcoming national surveys.³¹

43. Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W): FAO worldwide, in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union and others, supported the development, piloting and validation of the MDD-W, an indicator to measure impacts of food-based approaches and their potential contribution to reduce malnutrition. FAO supports its

²⁷ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO’s contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>

²⁸ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO Strategic Objective 1: Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I9572EN/i9572en.pdf>; FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO’s Work in Nutrition*. Rome, pp. 119. Paragraph 29. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>

²⁹ FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO’s Contribution to Knowledge on Food and Agriculture*. Paragraph, ES8, finding 5. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd904e.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO’s Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Paragraph 92. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>

³⁰ Note: Prevalence of undernourishment (PoU) is based on national food balance sheets and calculates the share of the population falling below the minimum energy requirements, a measure expressing the availability of calories but does not provide information on people’s access to foods. PoU and FIES have the potential to complement each other.

³¹ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of the Project “Voices of the Hungry”*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I9282EN/i9282en.pdf>

promotion, however FAO's contribution to the application in the Asian and Pacific context has not been evaluated yet.³²

44. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC): Since 2014, FAO has supported the development and establishment of the IPC acute or chronic scales, as a tool to standardize, provide evidence and guide decisions to improve emergency and development policy and programming. Since 2014 it has been applied in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Timor-Leste. FAO supported the development of the tool and has built country-level capacities and supported its implementation. Even though it was frequently applied in RAP, supportive to standardize and harmonize indicators and methodologies, the evaluation conducted in early 2019 revealed that in-country use was more for background information purposes, rather than for decision-making. It appeared to be more advanced for applications in emergency contexts and as an early warning tool than in a developmental context. A lack of consensus delayed releases in Afghanistan, where data collection was reported to be infrequent, with the consequence that out-of-date data was fed into the IPC analysis. Dependence and limited availability of secondary data undermines its credibility; slow endorsement delayed official use also in Pakistan, and appeared as a problem across many Asian and Pacific countries.³³ IPC was introduced in Pakistan in 2012 with the specific objective of strengthening evidence-based food security coordination and analysis for improved programming, two cycles of IPC were implemented. Pakistan's CPE presented IPC as a monitoring tool; it did not elaborate further on its usefulness as such a tool.³⁴

45. Context-specific analysis requires more attention: The evaluations that were reviewed recognized a lack of context-specific analysis that would help to identify and prioritize impactful interventions. Examples include: information that identifies impactful links between agriculture, food and nutritional objectives, including the value of local foods and nutrition; information that helps to identify the needs and opportunities of particular population groups, for example landless populations or address emerging issues, such as urban food and nutrition security, overweight and obesity; and information that supports the design of interventions, such as value chain analysis and opportunities to women-managed value chains, cropping preferences of women and men, opportunities to reduce women's drudgery. Bhutan proposed more specific information that helps to establish a targeting mechanism to focus on vulnerable groups as a priority to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.³⁵

Finding 3. Partnerships and networks were strengthened in light of the ZHC. FAO successfully engaged with partner institutions at the regional level as well as at the country level. FAO was particularly strong with partners in the agriculture, food, livestock and fishery sectors, and attention to the importance of networks engaging non-traditional partners and sectors increased.

46. FAO's contributions to partnerships: The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), jointly organized with WHO, and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025, as well as FAO's active involvement in the SUN movement was largely appreciated and set high expectations for FAO leadership and capacity to facilitate partnerships for food-based approaches to nutrition.

47. All evaluations reviewed concluded that FAO has an excellent and fruitful level of cooperation and collaboration with its direct government and partner institutions mainly from agriculture, livestock, fishery and forestry or natural resource management institutions, in addition to the national food safety authority where such support was included in FAO's portfolio.

48. FAO was also able to enhance the level of engagement with non-governmental and regional Bodies. Instrumental to gaining momentum in this regard were key partnerships such as with UNICEF, WFP, WHO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), ASEAN, SAARC,

³² *Ibid.* Finding 11, paragraphs 97 and 98.

³³ FAO. 2019. *Final Evaluation of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Global Strategic Programme (GSP), 2014-2018*. Paragraphs 54, 101 and 120. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4203en/ca4203en.pdf>

³⁴ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>

³⁵ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bhutan*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA1565EN/ca1565en.pdf>

IFPRI and the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR).³⁶ It also maintains strategic partnerships with donors, such as the European Union, USAID or the World Bank on many aspects related to food and nutrition security.

49. FAO's regional office in collaboration with the FAO Nutrition and Food Systems Division (ESN) facilitated the ASEAN High-Level Consultative Meeting and supported the integration of nutrition into the ASEAN Food Security Framework and its Strategic Plan of Action for Food Security; the meeting involved 100 participants, mostly senior officials from ASEAN member countries.³⁷

50. It has also been noted that the FAO-led flagship publications *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2018* and *2019* have been developed and published jointly with other UN partner agencies, namely UNICEF, WFP and WHO.

51. FAO in cooperation with the UN Nutrition partners, UNICEF, WHO and WFP as well as the World Bank, and with the support of ESN, co-hosted the Regional Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems and Healthy Diets in 2017. This was an important event mainstreaming and strengthening actions and partnerships addressing malnutrition through food-based approaches.³⁸

52. The mutual agreements with UN agencies in RAP resulted in UNDAF alignments such as in Bhutan and in a joint One UN Strategic Priority Area for Food and Nutrition Security in Pakistan. Furthermore, in Timor-Leste, FAO was successful in supporting the ZHC through the National Council for Food Security, Sovereignty and Nutrition in Timor-Leste (KONSSANTIL), which provided a platform for potential engagement with the UN agencies and development partners working on nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive areas. However, the evaluations concluded that no tangible partnerships materialized around these issues.³⁹

53. FAO also established and maintained effective partnerships for improving food safety and successful coordination between different actors (different ministries and line agencies at national and subnational level, technical and scientific institutions; consumer networks; private sector organizations; WHO, the World Trade Organization [WTO], ASEAN, etc.) despite some political and context-specific challenges, with most promising results in Bangladesh.⁴⁰

54. Challenges exist in establishing partnerships with non-traditional partners: Even though FAO's role in food and nutrition security is undisputed, its contribution to effective partnerships was below expectations in some circumstances, as evident from the evaluations reviewed. FAO's engagement with non-traditional partners, e.g. non-agriculture institutions such as the health sector, limited opportunities for strong integration of food-based approaches in sectors other than agriculture.⁴¹ In Myanmar, FAO worked very closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, but lost its authority to engage effectively with the Ministry of Health.⁴² Furthermore, partnerships with research institutions could help strengthen the integration of nutrition in agriculture policies and programmes that improve the quality of services and provide options for systematic evaluation.⁴³ Though private sector involvement in the project "Strengthening Vietnamese Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measure (SPS) Capacities for Trade: Improving safety and quality of fresh vegetables through the value-chain approach (Phase

³⁶ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Rome, pp. 119. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015-2018*. Paragraph 59. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5653en/ca5653en.pdf>.

⁴⁰ FAO. 2017. *Bangladesh Food Safety Cluster Evaluation*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd703e.pdf>.

⁴¹ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015-2018*.

Paragraph 59. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5653en/ca5653en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>.

⁴² FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Programme*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8557EN/i8557en.pdf>.

⁴³ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Paragraph 3, Recommendation 5. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>

II)", linking farmers to supermarkets, has been recognized as a good example, FAO's policy on private sector partnerships, in particular on food safety and value chains, is an emerging need and not sufficiently advanced at Country Office level. Several opportunities for entry points, including partnerships with other UN organizations dealing directly with the private sector, or engagement with multistakeholder platforms to strengthen regulatory frameworks conducive to private sector development exist.⁴⁴

Finding 4. FAO successfully supported the development of regulations and the implementation of food safety, quality and hygiene standards. The support is highly relevant to food safety issues and trade potential in the region and requires continued support to achieve results.

55. The links are self-evident between sustainable use of food system resources, food security and the food chain, nutrition and food safety, including healthy foods, labelling and consumer protection.⁴⁵ FAO is perceived as a leading authority in the development of national legislation and regulatory frameworks for food safety, quality and standards.⁴⁶ Its capacity in the development of food safety policies, standards, norms as well as its statistical strength are well recognized.⁴⁷

56. FAO's contribution in the region was significant at the policy, technical and grassroots levels, in particular in Bangladesh, and in terms of strengthening institutions and governance structures to formulate and implement food safety-related measures. Most countries in the region are members of the CODEX Alimentarius network and have adopted the CODEX food safety and quality standards as a framework for national food regulations and compliance with regional agreements under ASEAN. Less highlighted for Pakistan, but strongly highlighted for other countries was that FAO showed strong leadership, technical capacity and successful promotion of a wide range of useful tools and guidelines to improve food safety and hygiene practices. In Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar and Viet Nam, evaluations reported the prioritization of food safety into FAO's country portfolio.⁴⁸ Good results were obtained in strengthening and implementing laws and regulations and improving food safety practices among beneficiaries. In Myanmar, improving food safety-related practices was successfully integrated across the supply chain interventions, e.g. in the dairy and fishery sector as well as mango processing.⁴⁹

57. Areas to improve FAOs contribution to food safety: Overall, efforts should be accelerated, building on achievements and prioritizing food safety in upcoming country programme cycles to pilot and scale up successful interventions. It is also important to continue grassroots engagement and demonstrate the benefits of a safe and quality food system to promote behavioural change more effectively, as well as providing evidence to sensitize decision-makers.

Finding 5 (Enabling factors). Global partnership arrangements, available strategic frameworks and associated normative and technical guidelines and knowledge products, were important to support decentralized capacities and processes. Availability and continuity of staff as well as access to the

⁴⁴ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Strategic Objective 4: Enabling Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems, Review of the Implementation of FAO's Strategy for Improving Food Safety Globally*. Paragraph 117. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd712e.pdf>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Findings 29 and 11. Rome, pp. 119. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>

⁴⁸ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Program*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8557EN/i8557en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Strategic Objective 4: Enabling Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems, Review of the Implementation of FAO's Strategy for Improving Food Safety Globally*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd712e.pdf>.

⁴⁹ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Program*. Finding 17. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8557EN/i8557en.pdf>.

regional or headquarters expert pool were also important factors that helped FAO's Country Offices to achieve results.

58. Global events and strategic frameworks, such as the ICN2 and Plan of Action, UN Decade of Action for Nutrition, or the global SUN movement, provided useful guidance to facilitate country processes in particular on food-based approaches and strategic partnerships.⁵⁰

59. Global knowledge products, standards and tools provided useful guidance for application within the country context (such as FIES, IPC, dietary guidelines, learning courses on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, harmonized approach for common food-based outcome indicators etc.). FAO's global training tools supported building Country Offices and partners' capacities.

60. The ZHI provides a potentially useful framework for concerted action. The involvement of regional bodies as well as the high-level political support to ZHI, such as the Secretary-General of the United Nations helped to gain momentum in the region, influences and creates the space for policy support and makes it possible to achieve results.⁵¹

61. The global launch of the ZHC predated the formulation of FAO's Strategic Objectives. The pre-existence of the ZHC had been capitalized upon in the design of SO1. FAO's global strategic framework was supportive to planning at the country office level and helped to streamline and prioritize the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in FAO's CPFs.⁵²

62. The introduction of the CPFs as FAO's strategic planning instrument, together with the lessons and experiences arising from previous planning cycles, the availability of the CPF guidelines and support through the Strategic Programme (SP) teams, were all helpful in aligning and harmonizing approaches. Close collaboration with the regional and/or global SP teams has been recognized as enabling Country Offices to achieve better results.

63. Progress was stronger in countries where the continuity of dedicated and experienced Country Offices professionals was ensured. Countries supported through the European Union's Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST) programme were better positioned, enabling Country Offices to post experts to work closely with partners, allowing for a stronger facilitation of processes such as the development of policies, strategies and action plans, with good examples observed in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Timor-Leste.

64. The RI-ZH TCP allowed access to small funds and enabled country offices to initiate actions, prepare advocacy events, facilitate action plans and policies, and to conduct studies and pilot projects, for example in Cambodia. However, the efficiency was considered to be limited where funds were more easily available through FAO's country programmes, for example in Bangladesh. This was due to high transaction costs given the relatively small funding allocation.⁵³

Finding 6 (Constraining factors). FAO's effectiveness was seriously constrained by the limited financial and human resource capacity available for food and nutrition related matters in partner institutions and in FAO Country Offices. In addition, a lack of evidence-based information impaired FAO's ability to influence policies, design effective interventions and track progress. Instability within government arrangements also limited effectiveness.

⁵⁰ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Rome, pp. 119. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>

⁵¹ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO Strategic Objective 1: Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition*. Paragraphs 16 and 73. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I9572EN/i9572en.pdf>; FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Finding 29. Rome, pp. 119. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>.

⁵² FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO Strategic Objective 1: Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition*. Paragraph 136. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I9572EN/i9572en.pdf>.

⁵³ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Paragraph 52. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>.

65. Resource constraints among partner institutions as well as FAO were recognized as a main factor compromising effective implementation of the ZHI and multisectoral action plans; cost estimates of a resource mobilization plan were usually not developed, hence, resource mobilization became difficult.

66. The human resource capacity of a Country Office has been crucial for ensuring a substantial contribution. Capacity constraints on matters related to food and nutrition were the most frequently identified constraints for Country Offices, in particular where FAO only has a small representation. As a consequence, in many circumstances FAO could not nominate an experienced professional to coordinate and mainstream nutrition widely. In Myanmar, for example, FAO transferred such responsibilities to an external coordinator, which seriously limited FAO's contribution. Lack of capacities at Country Offices also created dependence on the regional office or headquarters resource pool, which limits FAO's flexibility and strength for a consistent support at the country level.

67. Missing quality, national and context-specific data and information to show evidence was frequently considered as a main constraint limiting FAO's opportunities to influence policies, design large-scale investment or field-level projects, set national and subnational targets and track progress.

68. Instability and changes in governmental arrangements interrupted and delayed processes, resulting in inefficiencies and hampering achievements, as mentioned for Afghanistan.

Gaps and emerging issues

69. This chapter presents gaps and emerging issues that require further attention to achieve food and nutrition security in partner countries. It only presents the results of the evaluations and does not provide a comprehensive analysis of gaps or issues against priority needs in the region. Where identified, it also incorporates positive learning examples.

Finding 7. FAO's support to countries had a limited impact on reducing hunger and malnutrition in the region, as strategies and action plans developed with FAO support were not implemented effectively, and pilot projects were seldom scaled up into larger programmes.

70. While the integration of food security and nutrition into policies and overall framework was generally reported to work well, evaluations concluded that FAO was weak in mainstreaming nutrition and implementing actionable programmes for food security and nutrition. A common feature was that FAO's interventions on food security were on a pilot basis, had limited coverage and were of relatively short duration, and, hence, difficult to achieve either visible or measurable results. Hence, FAO missed opportunities to gain greater recognition for its efforts.⁵⁴

71. The following example provides evidence supporting the above: Despite the launch, the high profile of the ZHI and the development of an action plan, there was little indication of momentum on the plan following its endorsement in Cambodia. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, FAO's assistance was designed to support the country's efforts to reduce malnutrition and eradicate hunger. FAO was also a member of the UN network supporting SUN, yet it did not show the expected contributions to nutrition-sensitive actions. FAO in Pakistan supported the Government proactively in the design of Zero-Hunger programmes, the respective priority area under the One UN Programme and a priority in multisectoral processes, yet acceleration of efforts to integrate nutrition in agriculture investment and, hence, achievements remained very limited. This was also evident in Myanmar. The CPE concluded that FAO was less successful in coordinating the implementation of the Myanmar National Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Security responding to the ZHC.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015-2018*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5653en/ca5653en.pdf>; FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>.

⁵⁵ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017*. Available at:

Finding 8. FAO's support to value chains, as a means of addressing hunger and malnutrition, has great potential but requires improvements in their design to ensure the adding of value. While value chains focus on the economic values, attention to their contribution to improving food security and nutrition, which is an emerging need for the region, is missing.

72. In Asia, especially in middle-income countries, many economies are market-driven and have expanded their efforts from production, solely meeting food security concerns, towards trade and economic growth. FAO is well positioned to support governments in addressing such emerging needs. FAO in Asia and Pacific has supported policy measures for adding value, managing quality and reducing post-harvest losses in fresh produce supply chains, for example in Viet Nam.⁵⁶

73. The SO 4 Evaluation also reported that projects successfully introduced technologies as a means to reduce losses (e.g. trialled sacks, crates, hot water treatment and cold chains), showing significant results (banana losses in Sri Lanka reduced from 21 percent to 14.1 percent along the value chain; traditional cauliflower losses in Nepal reduced from 52 percent to 18.3 percent; mango losses in Bangladesh reduced from 25.1 percent to 7 percent). Measures were complemented by awareness-raising and promotion of social, economic and environmental benefits.⁵⁷

74. Less promising observations were presented by the CPEs of Bhutan, Cambodia and Timor-Leste. In Bhutan, results of the rice and maize value chain remained limited, products continued to be sold at temporary markets, failed in providing predictable quantities and quality to the consumers and did not improve packaging or labelling. Supply chains remain underdeveloped, lacking attention to post-harvest management, focus on high-value products and building farmers' knowledge to improve quality and yields.⁵⁸

75. In Cambodia, FAO promotes a value chain development, but misses a systematic approach to ensure value additions and to meet the requirements of market operators and consumers. There was a lack of support to establish market linkages and to develop capacities to empower small and medium size players, producer organizations, providing access to knowledge and skills required to compete on markets equitably.⁵⁹ The evaluation also highlights the importance of enhanced results for nutritional aspects of affected populations.⁶⁰

76. For Timor-Leste, the market-oriented and value chain initiatives failed to link producers to markets and to bring economic benefits to small-scale farmers. High levels of post-harvest losses (over 35 percent according to FAO's assessment) remained as a major problem in the fruit and vegetable value chains. These losses continue to negatively impact food availability and food security. Opportunities to support smallholder intensification and commercialization do exist for FAO by consolidating lessons from previous initiatives and identifying what worked, why, how and for whom.⁶¹

77. In many of the small island developing states (SIDS) (including Pacific and Indian Ocean) there has been growing reliance on imports, and poor nutrition and obesity are emerging issues. To become more self-reliant and to decrease foreign currency expenditure, focus was placed on improving local food production, including more diversified value chains. Tourism and local supermarkets would provide important markets. In the Pacific's Cook Islands, a TCP has supported the vanilla and high-

<http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Program*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8557EN/i8557en.pdf>.

⁵⁶ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Strategic Objective 4: Enabling Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems, Review of the Implementation of FAO's Strategy for Improving Food Safety Globally*. Paragraph 39. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd712e.pdf>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bhutan*. Box 2, paragraphs 14 and 68. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA1565EN/ca1565en.pdf>.

⁵⁹ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Paragraph 10. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Paragraphs 6, 108 and 222.

⁶¹ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015-2018*. Paragraphs 3, 72 and 117. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5653en/ca5653en.pdf>.

value vegetable value chains. However, by the time the evaluation took place expected benefits had not yet been assessed.⁶²

Finding 9. Reporting, monitoring and evaluation are not systematically pursued in FAO's operations, despite the emerging need to show results. However, it was functional where designed as an explicit output or component of a specific projects or programme. Yet, systematic management and effective use for decision-making or generation and sharing of knowledge was limited.

78. The absence of monitoring data makes it difficult to evaluate what worked well/less well and to use learning from the past to design more effective interventions for future. As a consequence, FAO is not in a position to showcase its contributions, provide evidence and strongly advocate and mobilize resources for successful sustainable approaches.

79. FAO's CPFs provide good opportunities to report, monitor and evaluate performance against outputs, outcomes, results and targets. However, FAO's reporting and monitoring is not done systematically, pathways between the CPF "outputs" and the stated CPF results are not clarified, and some CPEs noted unrealistic indicators and the lack of relevant baseline data and targets. Furthermore, CPF indicators and targets are not well linked to field operations. Programmes and projects often lack a well-defined results or logical framework.⁶³

80. The evaluations reviewed, showed that a monitoring system was lacking for the country programmes of Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Timor-Leste. Furthermore, the evaluations also concluded that learning from field-level implementation was rare. Gaps were evident for all levels, including monitoring and evaluation of outcomes of policies, programmes and projects and activities, and TCP outcomes were not monitored. Where reports were available, they mainly reported achievements at activity or output level, or were designed to match specific donor requirements. Where results were available, they had little effect on decisions or on the design of new projects.⁶⁴

81. Selected programmes had embedded a component of supporting partner institutions to establish a monitoring and evaluation system. Under such circumstances, resources and staff were allocated or incentives were provided and systems were functional but still required further improvements to become fully effective to support decision-making and to generate evidence in a systematic manner.

82. The monitoring system established under the Environmentally Sustainable Food Security Programme (ESFSP) in Myanmar provided a good example by demonstrating a functional system. Further, the "Improving Food Security and Market Linkages for Smallholders in Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear" (MALIS) study undertaken by a dedicated study team in Cambodia captured quantitative information to demonstrate impacts on improved dietary practices. Some progress in improving the monitoring and evaluation system had also been observed for Bhutan, where strengthening food and nutrition security monitoring was part of the commitment to the SAARC. For Timor-Leste and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the development of a monitoring and evaluation system was part of the support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, partly financed through a TCP.⁶⁵

⁶² FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Strategic Objective 4: Enabling Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems, Review of the Implementation of FAO's Strategy for Improving Food Safety Globally*. Paragraph 36. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd712e.pdf>.

⁶³ FAO. 2019. *Synthesis of findings and lessons learnt from the Strategic Objective Evaluations*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA3774EN>; FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Finding 29. Rome, pp. 119. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>.

⁶⁴ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Paragraph 52. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>

⁶⁵ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015-2018*. Paragraphs 3, 72 and 117. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5653en/ca5653en.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of*

83. In Afghanistan and Bangladesh, FAO's project designs explicitly incorporated the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system with the objective providing oversight and guiding the management of Food Security and Nutrition interventions, providing evidence to identify best practices, and allowing regular project adjustments. In both countries, FAO assisted in building institutional and human capacities, the monitoring and evaluation systems were functional, monitoring teams conducted regular field-level monitoring visits, and results were being reported and shared with decision-makers.⁶⁶

Finding 10. Deficiencies in knowledge management and dissemination limited FAO's overall achievements, its opportunities to capitalize on achievements and good practices, and impaired its ability to influence platforms, policies and decision-makers. Existing networks can serve as platforms for wider dissemination, but were underutilized.

84. Weak knowledge management and the absence of a visibility, communication and dissemination plan limits the recognition of FAO's achievements and the use of lessons for decision-making.

85. While important information and country-level flagship publications were produced, they were not managed or shared widely. Examples are FAO's involvement in IPC, Census, Vulnerability, Food and Nutrition Surveys or evaluations.⁶⁷ Overall, effectiveness and outputs of FAO's knowledge management was limited, as a result of low capacities to manage data, the lack or limited quality of monitoring and evaluation results or missing outcome or impact measurements. This is in addition to the absence of visibility, dissemination and communication plans to share products widely.⁶⁸ Sharing results of pilots, in particular on the integration of nutrition, was recognized as missing in Cambodia, even though results were available.⁶⁹ Monitoring reports were seldom available for the Lao People's Democratic Republic.⁷⁰ It was also noted that although there were studies and assessments conducted, they were underutilized by decision-makers.⁷¹

FAO's Contribution to Bhutan. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA1565EN/ca1565en.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia.* Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>.

; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Programme.* Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8557EN/i8557en.pdf>; FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic.* Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>

⁶⁶ FAO. 2016. *Cluster evaluation of: Strengthening the Role of Women in Agriculture Development for Improved Household Food; Strengthening Policy Development and Coordination for Food and Nutrition Security in Afghanistan; Support to Extension Systems, Household Food and Livelihood Security.* Paragraphs 10 and 90. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bq875e.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Bangladesh Food Safety Cluster Evaluation.* Paragraphs 97, 117 and 122. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd703e.pdf>.

⁶⁷ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015-2018.* Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5653en/ca5653en.pdf>; FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic.* Paragraph 122. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia.* Conclusion 5. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh.* Paragraphs 331 and 346. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017.* Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>.

⁶⁸ FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic.* Conclusion 4, ES 26, Conclusion 6, Paragraph 252. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia.* Paragraphs 13, 77 and 187. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Programme.* Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8557EN/i8557en.pdf>.

⁶⁹ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia.* Paragraph 211, Recommendation 5, Paragraph 229. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>.

⁷⁰ FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic.* Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>

⁷¹ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017.* Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>.

86. Bottom-up knowledge flow hardly existed, even though strong results were available, for example from implementation in Bangladesh and Cambodia.⁷²

87. Existing platforms are underutilized: Bangladesh was recognized as being very successful in establishing networks with important in-country knowledge institutions serving as platforms for the generation and dissemination of knowledge.⁷³ However, other evaluations recommend the use of existing platforms, such as the Food Security Working Group, the One UN Platform or the development partners' forum, more strongly to disseminate knowledge.⁷⁴ Global platforms can further be leveraged. Examples are the FAO-managed Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition as well as the global Agriculture-Nutrition Community of Practice (Ag2Nut) online platform⁷⁵ that originated from FAO's initiative.⁷⁶

Finding 11. An emerging issue arising from the evaluations reviewed is the lack of attention to exit strategies and plans. This not only limits sustainability, but also limits opportunities to realise the full benefits and impact of FAO's investments.

88. FAO's role in implementation is to support pilot projects to learn and demonstrate potential benefits. Long-term impacts at scale are to be achieved through partner institutions better suited for actions at scale. This requires early thinking and carefully sequenced steps and milestones.

89. All evaluations reviewed found that projects in food and nutrition, food safety and food value chains, lack strategies to exit FAO's support, and yet sustain or scale up actions for results beyond the actual support phase.⁷⁷

90. However, a positive example has been demonstrated in Bangladesh with a carefully designed strategic approach that paid attention to establishing sustainable structures, building ownership and providing continuity. FAO had successfully strengthened capacities of existing institutions and involved a wide range of partners, supported the development of policies and regulations, created replicable examples and developed manuals and guidelines that built on national and field-level experience. As a result, there were positive indications by the Government to increase staffing for food

⁷² FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Bangladesh Food Safety Cluster Evaluation*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd703e.pdf>.

⁷³ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Paragraphs 291 and 316. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>

⁷⁴ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017*. Paragraph 93. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>.

⁷⁵ This non-exhaustive list was collected with support from DDN, OPC, TDs and ROs in late 2014, around 123 global networks, including 103 discussion groups, 14 technical and 6 informal networks.

⁷⁶ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Paragraph 14. Rome, pp. 119. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>

⁷⁷ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 2012-2017*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BU280/bu280.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Program*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8557EN/i8557en.pdf>; FAO. 2015. *Evaluation of FAO's country programme in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-br837e.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bhutan*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA1565EN/ca1565en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Final Evaluation of the Environmentally Sustainable Food Security Program (ESFSP) in Myanmar*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd693e.pdf>; FAO. 2016. *Cluster evaluation of: Strengthening the Role of Women in Agriculture Development for Improved Household Food; Strengthening Policy Development and Coordination for Food and Nutrition Security in Afghanistan; Support to Extension Systems, Household Food and Livelihood Security*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bq875e.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO Strategic Objective 1: Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I9572EN/i9572en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Strategic Objective 4: Enabling Inclusive and Efficient Agricultural and Food Systems, Review of the Implementation of FAO's Strategy for Improving Food Safety Globally*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd712e.pdf>.

safety and budgetary provision for a continuation and a partial scaling up. Yet, the evaluation also stated that full realization of the benefits requires further capacity building and financial support.⁷⁸

Lessons learned

Lesson 1. A multi-pronged approach supporting strategic developments for Food and Nutrition Security, and strengthening the policy environment and creating commitment while simultaneously facilitating impactful interventions that create the evidence and support learning, leads to good results.

91. Lessons derived from FAO's support to food safety and food and nutrition security in Bangladesh and Afghanistan: FAO's support to food safety in Bangladesh included strengthening institutional structures and coordination, implementing standards and regulation setting mechanisms as well as technical and functional capacities, and simultaneously supported decentralized structures and incorporated consumer awareness for adoption of good practices at grass-root level. The positive examples of improved practices have created confidence and commitments at the policy level, which is also a key to sustainability. In Afghanistan FAO's support strengthened extension services to empower communities to improve their food security situation. At the same time, FAO strengthened upstream capacities for a policy dialogue and strategic developments for food and nutrition security. The evaluation concluded that FAO applied a systematic capacity development approach enhancing the capacity of both the responsible institutions and services providers as well as those entitled to receive the support (e.g. communities, producer groups or beneficiaries), with the examples of fruit and vegetable processing and mushroom cultivation appearing as successful lessons learned.

Lesson 2. Food safety and value chains have major potential to effectively support the eradication of hunger and malnutrition. However, it must be understood that they are complex and multi-dimensional requiring continued concerted efforts, a high level of expertise and capacities and well-coordinated partnerships in order to achieve good results.

92. With regard to food safety and value chains, FAO's CPE in Bangladesh presents a good lesson. Cooperation of all partners to build a reliable and effective food control system and raising awareness and the adoption of hygiene and food safety standards across the value chain, is a key to success. Building trust in the safety and quality of food from production to consumption is perceived as being crucial to improved practices. Upgrading market infrastructure and connectivity through capital investments, enabling access of smallholder groups to markets, credit, inputs and services to foster efficient and competitive value chains, are also important elements. Further, a sustainable approach requires an equal focus on productivity increases and facilitating market linkages, engaging farmer groups and producer organizations.⁷⁹

Lesson 3. Integration of nutrition in agriculture extension services and farmers field schools worked better where a long-term cooperation between government agriculture institutions and FAO existed and nutrition was prioritized.

93. In Afghanistan, Cambodia, Bangladesh, FAO closely worked with the Ministry of Agriculture over two to three project phases sensitizing and building capacities to improve the food and nutrition situations. In order to go beyond food security only, but aiming for better nutrition, nutrition promotion had successfully been integrated into agriculture services. Agriculture and nutrition teams of FAO and its partners jointly defined the nutrition objectives and corresponding workplans that included both improving the supply of diversified foods and creating demand through nutrition education. Agriculture extension services were strengthened in providing services to established farmer field schools, women's farmer and interest groups. Agriculture services supported homestead food production and diversification. This was complemented by nutrition promotion that included evidence-based nutrition interventions such as iron-folic acid supplementation during pregnancy, deworming, hand-washing and sanitation in the example of Cambodia and Bangladesh. In Afghanistan, an additional focus was to strengthen women's access to information, building marketing

⁷⁸ FAO. 2017. *Bangladesh Food Safety Cluster Evaluation*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd703e.pdf>.

⁷⁹ FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Paragraphs 62 and 63. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>

skills, establishing linkages between markets and village groups in particular for marketing of locally processed foods supporting the social and economic empowerment of women. In these three countries, it was also recognized that FAO systematically assessed community-level impacts through dedicated monitoring and evaluation efforts. Improved nutrition practices were reported for all countries; Cambodia's CPE also reported that farmers consumed a greater variety of vegetables and protein-rich foods.⁸⁰

Lesson 4. Monitoring and evaluation is important to show case successes, produce knowledge products, sensitize and raise awareness, and build trust and commitments among partners including donors. Monitoring and evaluation systems worked better where they were embedded into the programme design, rather than being perceived as a programme management function only. Offering incentives for monitoring results appeared as a successful approach to improve the monitoring and evaluation systems.

94. Ordinarily, FAO country- or project-level monitoring and evaluation system is not well established, FAO Country Offices operations do not always have a consistent results framework, and resources such as a monitoring unit of officers are not common, unless resources for monitoring is built in to FAO's work or partners' agreements. Where formulated as an objective of support to partner institutions or built into implementing partners' agreements, resources and staff were allocated and hence stronger systems were observed, for example in Bangladesh, Cambodia or Timor-Leste.⁸¹ An innovative approach has been applied by the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) in Myanmar, where clear incentives were attached, such as providing opportunities for continued funding.⁸² Though it was not linked to zero hunger and malnutrition, this lesson is transferable.

Lesson 5. Achieving sustainable results at scale requires a country specific, carefully designed and a progressively implemented exit strategy.

95. An important lesson derives from Bangladesh. The key to a successful phase-over from FAO to partners was to build on expanding the capacities of existing institutions, rather than creating new entities. Long-term capacity support included a wide range and large number of people trained from government, private sector and civil society organizations, providing technical expertise, building trust, ownership and commitment. Further, interproject coordination and synergies were crucial to sustain efforts and, very practically, a sufficiently large number of personnel was trained in order to cope with transfers and dropouts.⁸³

Conclusions and recommendations

96. Conclusion 1: The ZHI addresses priority needs of the region. Eradicating hunger and malnutrition are set as common goals of regional and country frameworks and are in alignment with the SDGs and FAO's SOs. In cooperation with partners and with support of FAO's expert pool, FAO was successful in advocating, sensitizing and raising awareness across the region. FAO supported the development of policies and multisectoral action plans. Support to regulatory frameworks, laws and

⁸⁰ FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Paragraph 52. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>; FAO. 2016. *Cluster evaluation of: Strengthening the Role of Women in Agriculture Development for Improved Household Food; Strengthening Policy Development and Coordination for Food and Nutrition Security in Afghanistan; Support to Extension Systems, Household Food and Livelihood Security*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bq875e.pdf>.

⁸¹ FAO. 2019. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2015-2018*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5653en/ca5653en.pdf>; FAO. 2018. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to The Kingdom of Cambodia*. Rome, pp. 89. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4448en/ca4448en.pdf>; FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Bangladesh*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/BD730/bd730.pdf>

⁸² FAO. 2017. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the Myanmar Country Program*. Paragraph 233. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8557EN/i8557en.pdf>.

⁸³ FAO. 2017. *Bangladesh Food Safety Cluster Evaluation*. Paragraph 135. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd703e.pdf>.

standards on food safety were very effective and contributed to improved practices where prioritized by the national government. FAO is recognized as a capacity, information and knowledge provider, and FAO products are highly appreciated and frequently used. Urban food insecurity and malnutrition as well as the burden of malnutrition (overweight and obesity) are new challenges emerging in the region, requiring greater attention and immediate actions. These issues were not discussed yet by the evaluation reviewed.

97. Recommendation 1: Further attention should be given to the generation of context-specific information, knowledge products and guidelines addressing the countries' and partners' information and knowledge gaps on food security and nutrition. A more systematic approach to the management and sharing of knowledge would enhance FAO's visibility, recognition and confidence of partners to invest in promising approaches. Sharing country lessons within the region or globally could support a transfer of knowledge, create synergies and improve efficiency and effectiveness. Existing platforms could be leveraged for this purpose.

98. Conclusion 2: FAO established a wide network of partners and its collaboration with key partners, at regional and national level, mainly from the agricultural, livestock, forestry, fishery sectors, and natural resource management appears excellent. Though there might have been more progress recently, the evaluations covering the years 2014 to 2018, lead to the conclusion that partnerships with non-traditional partners could be expanded further.

99. Recommendation 2: Networks with non-traditional partners could be strengthened and would provide an opportunity for a stronger integration of food-based approaches in sectors like health, education or social protection. A more active engagement with private sector entities is an emerging need in the region and would provide opportunities to improve the impact and sustainability of food safety and value chain related investments. Broadening partnerships with research institutions could provide good opportunities to improve nutrition-sensitive policies and service delivery. This is also important in light of addressing emerging needs and finding viable solutions for issues such as the double burden of malnutrition, healthy diets and obesity/overweight, urban food and nutrition security, issues arising for Asia and Pacific. Given the high-level and multisectoral nature of the SUN Movement and its backing by key donors, it is an appropriate platform to take an active role leading the dialogue on nutrition-sensitive approaches.

100. Conclusion 3: Value chain developments have considerable potential to support food security and nutrition, as well as driving economic growth in the region. Although reduction of post-harvest losses was reported in a number of countries, a systematic approach to ensure value addition has not yet been presented by the evaluations analysed. The need to address food safety issues consistently across the value chain has been discussed, but rarely dealt with.

101. Recommendation 3: Emerging from the results of the evaluations is the need to shift to a new area of emphasis in strengthening food safety systematically across the value chain and strengthen market linkages also by engaging with the private sector. Options for diversifying value chains to improve access to a more diversified diet, and hence, contribute to better nutrition, in particular among vulnerable populations, would require further attention. Closer cooperation between country offices and the regional office as well as headquarters expert teams, could aid learning from good practices to improve design and enhance the impact of food value chains on increasing incomes and availability of safe and nutritious foods that contributes to a diversified diet.

102. Conclusion 4: Gaps were observed in implementation of actionable programmes that would bring measurable impacts in food security and nutrition. In addition, the evaluations reviewed did not present findings on the integration of objectives to improve the quality of diets in agriculture investments.

103. Recommendation 4: FAO should work with partners to identify opportunities to integrate food and nutrition into large-scale agriculture investments. Practical lessons exist from experiences in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Cambodia. FAO's expert pool could support decentralized offices in transferring global lessons into a country context, and hence, support the active integration into actionable programmes. Further, overweight and obesity are recognized as emerging issues for Asia

and Pacific, and require more research and innovative solutions, and urgent actions to reduce the burden.

104. Conclusion 5: FAO Country Offices and projects frequently lack a systematic monitoring and evaluation system. In addition, the absence of communication and dissemination plans has also been observed. As a consequence, FAO misses opportunities to present results and share lessons and inform decision-makers.

105. Recommendation 5: A good monitoring and evaluation system would create opportunities for the systematic capitalizing on, and communication of FAO's achievements. A results-based management approach, setting pathways and a logical framework with clear objectives and outcome indicators, should be used to track progress. Future CPFs should ensure a strong integration of monitoring and evaluation with all programme activities. Innovative ways to incentivize monitoring and evaluation and to embed monitoring and evaluation into the programme design and implementation arrangements, could strengthen such systems.

106. Conclusion 6: FAO's technical assistance aims to initiate processes, to support policy dialogue, initiate successful implementation on a pilot basis, and provide solutions and good case examples. However, the absence of exit strategies limits sustainability, uptake and scaling up of actions and hence, limits options to realize the full potential impacts. Positive and transferable lessons were available from Bangladesh.

107. Recommendation 6: Exit strategies and implementation plans should be prepared and agreed on at the beginning of every operation. A smooth phase out requires a strategic approach to build on and expand existing capacities, develop ownership and set milestones for a gradual phase-over of responsibility. Engaging a wide range of partners, clarifying responsibilities, creating replicable examples, and preparing and supporting the application of guidance to implementation, all help to strengthen and sustain efforts beyond the active support phase.