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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**Santiago, Chile, 6-9 May 2014**

**Decentralization and Decentralized Offices Network**

## Executive Summary

- The decentralization process received further impetus in the LAC Region during the last biennium. This document summarizes the progress achieved and includes references to actions planned for the current biennium with the aim of strengthening the decentralized offices network to improve results-based management and coordination mechanisms across countries. The document stresses the efforts made by the Organization to increase the number of fully-fledged representations and the alignment of the CPFs with the new Strategic Framework of FAO to fully support member countries to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and poverty, and to increase agriculture production in a sustainable manner.

## Suggested actions by the Regional Conference

- Support the actions being undertaken to ensure the alignment of CPFs, Regional Initiatives and Strategic Objectives.
- Encourage support from within the region to FAO's country presence , and work in the region enabling FAO to concentrate its resources mainly on poorer and needier countries.
- Encourage FAO's work with private and civil society partners in pursuit of the Organization's Strategic Objectives and the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition throughout the region.

Any questions concerning the content of this paper may be sent to Mr. Tito Díaz, Secretary of the 33rd FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (Tito.Diaz@fao.org, Tel.: 56-2 2923-2250)

## I. Overview

1. The latest decentralization effort began in the LAC Region during the second half of the 2010-2011 biennium. Decentralization led to a number of almost-immediate results and benefits, as noted in the progress report presented at LARC 2012. Positive developments included: improved networking with cooperation agencies in jointly supporting national development plans; the integration of FAO's emergency and development activities; and the strengthening of national programmes in support of

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achieving FAO's vision of a world free from hunger and malnutrition. The increased emphasis given to decentralization during 2012-13 led to several positive developments within FAO's decentralized office structure in the region. For example, eight FAO Representative posts were filled, through a rigorous selection process the recruitment of support staff in country offices was accelerated, and over 200 country office staff from across the region were trained on administrative and operational matters.

2. These developments enabled FAO to (i) synergise impacts through increased coordination on focused results across countries throughout the region; (ii) enhance the Organization's visibility and demonstrate its increased strategic focus on results; and (iii) strengthen communication and outreach, and reduce travel costs through an increasing use of web-based technologies. The full integration of FAO's emergency and development activities was completed during 2013, including the establishment of support teams in the Regional and Subregional Offices.

3. FAO has signed Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) with 17 governments in the region, awaiting Government signature in one country and is implementing previously-agreed National Medium Term Priority Frameworks in fourteen other countries. One country is in the process of finalising its CPF. The CPFs are fully aligned with FAO's new Strategic Framework and provide the basis for FAO to support countries in their public policies to eradicate hunger and increase agricultural production in a sustainable manner.<sup>1</sup>

5. As part of the implementation of FAO's new Strategic Framework, activities funded from assessed Regular Programme contributions (including TCP resources) and voluntary extra-budgetary contributions will converge and be aligned fully with the Strategic Objectives and their action plans. In this regard, in December 2013, the 148th session of Council endorsed proposals for the Enhancement of the TCP, expressing its support for "the alignment of the enhanced Technical Cooperation Programme to the reviewed strategic framework and the bottom up alignment to national priorities through Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs)".<sup>2</sup> CPFs identify programming priorities and will guide the mobilization of resources, including the TCP. During the CPF formulation phase, the FAOR will highlight, under the strategic priorities identified, the outputs which could be achieved through TCP contributions. The indicative TCP pipeline will be added as an Annex to the CPF document and included in the resource mobilization plan.

6. During the 2012-2013 biennium, FAO strengthened its country presence in the region by upgrading its offices in Guatemala and Paraguay to fully-fledged Representations. Efforts were also made to strengthen the capacity of FAO to assist lower income priority countries, in particular Haiti, the poorest country in the region. The appointment of a new FAO Representative in Haiti coincided with both the integration of emergency and development activities in the region (including in Haiti) and the introduction of streamlined administrative practices that helped consolidate the internal working arrangements of the Organization. These operational changes delivered results. FAO's support to Haiti's Plan de Relance Agricole brought together 10 partner countries to discuss and programme their contributions through South-South Cooperation in support of the Plan. This support continues to bear fruit in the form of increased financial and in-kind resource flows during the 2014-2015 biennium (and additional agreements are in the pipeline).

4. In 2013, at the request of FAO's Programme Committee, FAO's Office of Evaluation carried out an evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean, the last in a series of evaluations of all such offices in all regions. The report and its recommendations, along with the Management Response will be presented to the 115th Session of FAO's Programme Committee in late May 2014. The objective of the evaluation was to provide FAO and its Members with an independent assessment of (i) progress made with regard to decentralization in the region; and (ii) the results of decentralization. FAO Management has welcomed the evaluation. It will contribute directly to the ongoing strengthening of FAO's structure and capacity throughout the region. The evaluation provides an important snapshot of the progress that has been made since the implementation of wide-ranging transformative changes across the Organization which began at the

<sup>1</sup> LARC/14/5 rev.1 paragraphs 15-19

<sup>2</sup> CL 148/REP paragraph 9a)

start of 2012. The evaluation recognises the progress that has been made and highlights a number of areas that would benefit from further attention. Management believes that the main findings and recommendations are fully in line with the ongoing approach to strengthen decentralisation and reflect several of the actions that are already being implemented.

## **II. Emerging Issues**

7. LARC 2012 emphasized the importance of allocating sufficient human and financial resources to ensure adequate support to FAO country offices across the region. Significant efforts have been made in this regard.<sup>3</sup> The high number of middle and high income countries in the region<sup>4</sup> has significant implications for FAO's ability to attract donor support and is leading to an increasing reliance on country-supported initiatives (through Unilateral Trust Fund projects) to respond to priority country needs. In such countries, the comparative advantage and role of FAO as well as its current country presence are evolving, and consideration should be given to innovative forms of cooperation during the course of the current biennium and beyond. The objective is to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable sectors of the population in the region and on eliciting greater participation from middle-income countries, including through South-South Cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

8. In April 2013, FAO Council approved two new Strategies aimed at strengthening FAO's partnerships with civil society organizations on the one hand and the private sector on the other. The Strategies provide a framework for FAO's work with private and civil society partners, including regional organizations, in pursuit of the Organization's Strategic Objectives and the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. FAO has strengthened its efforts to engage with a broad range of civil society and private sector partners and regional organizations in order to leverage support and results across the region.

## **III. Guidance sought**

10. The Conference is invited to review and consider the following key recommendations for discussion by the Council:

- Support the actions being undertaken to ensure the alignment of CPFs, Regional Initiatives and Strategic Objectives
- Encourage support from within the region to FAO's country presence and work in the region, enabling FAO to concentrate limited resources mainly on the neediest countries. Encourage FAO's work with private and civil society partners in pursuit of the Organization's Strategic Objectives and the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition throughout the region.

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<sup>3</sup> LARC/14/5 rev.1 paragraph 8.

<sup>4</sup> Only one country in the LAC Region is classified as "low-income" in the World Bank's current analytical income categories.

<sup>5</sup> LARC/INF/17 Strengthening South South Cooperation for Food and Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean.