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**Synthesis of lessons learnt in the application of  
the Country Programming Framework**

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**THEMATIC EVALUATION SERIES**

**Synthesis of lessons learnt  
in the application of  
the Country Programming Framework**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE OF EVALUATION  
2018**

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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acronyms and abbreviations.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction .....	8
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Background.....	11
1.1.1 The genesis and evolution of CPFs .....	11
1.1.2 The CPF today .....	12
1.2 Objective, scope and methodology .....	13
1.2.1 Objective.....	13
1.2.2 Scope .....	13
1.2.3 Data sources .....	14
1.2.4 Methodology .....	14
1.3 Limitations.....	15
1.4 Structure of the report .....	15
<b>2. Findings .....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 Clarity of concept and adequacy of the process.....	16
2.1.1 Clarity of concept .....	16
2.1.2 Setting priorities .....	17
2.1.3 Context analysis.....	19
2.1.4 Governance .....	20
2.2 Operational utility of the CPF .....	21
2.2.1 Resource estimation.....	21
2.2.2 Monitoring and evaluation.....	24
2.2.3 Partnerships.....	24
2.3 Programmatic utility of the CPF.....	26
2.3.1 Results-based management.....	26
2.3.2 Integrating SDGs.....	28
2.3.3 Integrating gender issues .....	29
<b>3. Conclusions and recommendations .....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1 Conclusions.....	30
3.2 Recommendations.....	31

## List of Boxes and Figures

### Figures

<a href="#">Figure 1: The evolution of FAO country programming frameworks.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Figure 2: Level of support the country received to formulate the CPF.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Figure 3: Quality of the support received to formulate the CPF .....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Figure 4: Most challenging step in formulating the CPF.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Figure 5: Indicator by region .....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Figure 6: Indicator by size of the office (# of staff).....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Figure 7: Indicator overtime – average by region.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Figure 8: Indicator overtime – average by size of the country office (# of staff).....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Figure 9: CPF results chain.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Figure 9: Examples of inconsistency between CPF and corporate outputs: Ethiopia and Uruguay .....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>

### Boxes

<a href="#">Box 1: Key features of the CPF.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Box 2: Context analysis in CPEs: examples of Pakistan, Kenya, Myanmar and South Sudan .</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Box 3: Collaboration between FAO and WFP on country programming.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>

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## **Acronyms and abbreviations**

CGA	Country Gender Assessment
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CPF	Country Programming Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAOR	FAO Representative
FPMIS	Field Programme Management Information System
PIRES	Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support System
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

1. This report was prepared in accordance of the evaluation plan approved by the Programme Committee at its 120th Session (November 2016). The objective of this synthesis is to examine the effectiveness of FAO's Country Programme Framework (CPF) as a management tool for country-level programming, based on the findings from Country Programme Evaluations conducted by the Office of Evaluation (OED) and other sources.
2. Twenty-one (21) Country Programme Evaluations carried out between 2011 and 2017 were reviewed. Because FAO made a major revision of the CPF guidelines in 2015, 55 CPFs developed since then were also reviewed to reflect the most recent information. An e-survey and several follow-ups were conducted to collect feedback from 21 FAO Representatives (FAORs) in the countries. Interviews with key informants from headquarters and regional offices were conducted to validate the findings. Other relevant documents, such as the reports of the Office of the Inspector General, were consulted.
3. This report presents evidence on best practices, lessons learned and challenges related to planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of country programmes, and suggest a set of recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the CPFs.

### Findings

4. The review examined the effectiveness of the CPF in three aspects. The respective findings are as follows:

#### ***Clarity of concept and adequacy of the CPF process***

5. The latest CPF guidelines (2015) are found to be clear, and improved on the previous guidelines especially in the alignment of CPFs with FAO Strategic Framework. At the same time, FAORs noted that the new guidelines, while improved in operationalising the Strategic Framework, provide less scope for country-level customisation based on the context and needs.
6. FAORs generally expressed satisfaction with the support received in the CPF formulation. FAO's technical and operational knowledge was however not always put to full use in supporting country office identify strategic priorities with the government.
7. It is not evident that the CPFs are based on adequate context analysis and information, such as on sectoral data, economic and political environment, and opportunities for collaboration with partners.
8. Once the CPF is formulated, there is not often an effective oversight mechanism at the country level that guides the implementation, based on the performance and the results achieved.

#### ***Operational utility of the CPF***



9. The process of setting indicative resource requirements has improved overtime. However, the figures are still over-estimated in many cases. There is a credibility risk if the expectations are raised too high.
10. Monitoring of the contribution at the outcome level (CPF country outcomes) is not systematic. The CPF indicators are not generally linked to field programme/project indicators, preventing efficient data collection. The CPF is not systematically used to track progress on results achieved, and to adjust the programme accordingly.
11. The CPFs are generally designed in collaboration with government entities. Challenges remain to broaden the array of partners involved and consider them as partners for achieving results.

### ***Programmatic utility of the CPF***

12. At the country level, the CPFs and their results framework generally lack the theory of change that explains how the country programme would contribute to the national priorities. At the corporate level, the current generation of CPFs has improved on the alignment with the Strategic Framework with coherence ensured at the output level. The use of outputs for performance measuring and target setting is not conducive to results-based management at the country level.
13. Integration of SDGs is in progress nationally as well as in the FAO country programming. Future CPFs needs to pay attention to this aspect.
14. Integration of gender dimension to the CPFs through Country Gender Assessments was uneven, both in timing and in quality.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

15. **Conclusion 1.** In the last few years, FAO reformed country level programming, based on institutional adaptive learning. However, the CPF has not yet received the full support it merits from the whole of FAO. FAO has the knowledge and means to ensure CPF priorities are based on the best contextual and technical knowledge available.
16. **Recommendation 1:** FAO should enhance the CPF process by increasing attention to context analysis, stakeholder engagement and governance arrangements.

### ***Recommended actions:***

- Country support teams should be formalized and include staff that have worked closely with the country or have expertise relevant to the country.
  - Country support teams should assist with context analysis, need assessments or national-led studies of strategic nature with a view to provide solid basis for strategic prioritization and programme design.
  - CPFs should have a steering committee, comprising representatives from the government, FAO and other key partners.
17. **Conclusion 2.** The CPF is not yet an effective instrument for resource mobilization, monitoring and oversight. The CPF tends to lose its relevance in actual implementation due

to the lack of tools and capacities to support a programmatic approach and unrealistic estimation of resources.

18. **Recommendation 2:** FAO should enhance capacities and tools for estimation of resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation.

***Recommended actions:***

- Enhance guidance for establishing well-explained resource mobilization targets, and their quality assurance methods.
  - Include monitoring and evaluation plans in the CPFs.
19. **Conclusion 3.** The CPFs are now better aligned to the FAO Strategic Framework, but yet to provide a solid basis for results-based management at the country level. Central to the programme approach that allows effective results-based management is the attention to the CPF country outcomes and an integral results chain linking the country outcomes upwards to national objectives and SDGs, supported by rigorous context analysis, and downwards to FAO field programme and other activities, which provide infrastructure for the CPF management.
20. **Recommendation 3.** FAO should strengthen the CPFs as an effective instrument for the results-based management at the country level.

***Recommended actions:***

- Specify attainable country-level outcomes in CPFs, based on well-defined theories of change, linking the field programme to national objectives.
- Use outcomes rather than outputs as the main point of reference in measuring performance and setting targets for the CPFs.
- Ensure timely production and use of Country Gender Assessments in the CPFs.

# 1. Introduction

1. The Office of Evaluation (OED) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was requested by the Programme Committee at its 120th Session (November 2016) to assess the effectiveness of the Country Programming Framework (CPF).<sup>1</sup>
2. This synthesis presents evaluative evidence on best practices, lessons learned and challenges related to planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of country programmes, and suggests a set of actionable recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the CPFs.

## 1.1 Background

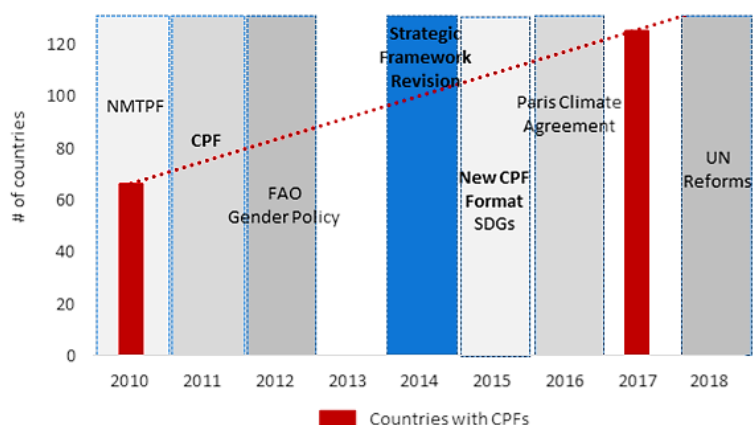
### 1.1.1 The genesis and evolution of CPFs

3. Country Programming in FAO was formally started in 2006 when the National Medium-Term Priority Framework Guidelines were established. By 2010, 66 countries had reportedly signed a country level agreement with FAO. Following the "Strategic Evaluation of FAO Country Programming"<sup>2</sup> (2011), FAO introduced the CPFs.
4. In 2013, FAO revised its Strategic Framework 2010-19, establishing a new planning structure around five Strategic Objectives with country-level targets and indicators. In 2015, the CPF guidance went through a major revision to, among other things, ensure the alignment of country level results with those in the revised Strategic Framework as well as to increase the consideration given to national policies and to gender mainstreaming. Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2016, FAO introduced additional changes to the CPF to ensure consideration of the SDGs and mainstreaming of climate change.
5. In 2017, the Secretary-General of the United Nations announced a reform agenda of the United Nations Development System at country level. This reform agenda, which is still evolving, aims at a more coordinated and efficient United Nations Development System. Figure 1 shows a timeline of events influencing the CPF, which by the end of 2017 reached 125 countries.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mr719e.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/019/k8684e.pdf>

**Figure 1:** The evolution of FAO country programming frameworks

### 1.1.2 The CPF today

6. According to FAO, the CPF “defines the development priorities for collaboration between FAO and a member country, the outputs to be achieved contributing to national priorities, regional priorities and corporate results, and the resources and partnerships required”. The ultimate end is that “The strategic thinking taking place during the preparation of the CPF should increase the results-orientation and visibility of FAO’s work at the country level”<sup>3</sup>. CPFs are also a delivery mechanism of the Organization, thus an important building block of the FAO results-based management system.<sup>4</sup>
7. The post-2015 CPFs serve a dual purpose: i) respond to individual member country priorities; and ii) address commitments to members collectively articulated through the FAO Strategic Framework. The post-2015 CPFs establish a link between the CPF and the strategic framework at output level, something that was missing in the previous guidelines and, in the same time, focus on national priorities.
8. Key features of the new CPF structure adopted in 2015 are summarized below.

#### Box 1: Key features of the CPF

- CPFs should be synchronized with the government national policy process and time frame.
- CPFs should be signed by the relevant government counterpart institution.
- CPFs should comprise four key elements:
  - 1) Country context and priorities      A brief on the main national development and sector strategies and policies related to the identified priority areas for FAOs support.
  - 2) FAO’s contribution and expected results      Description of priority areas, including any prioritized SDGs<sup>5</sup> as identified by the Government. List of country outcomes – for each FAO describes the main issues, gaps, data requirements and anticipated results of FAO interventions, including related cross-

<sup>3</sup>Guide to the Formulation of the Country Programming Framework (CPF), available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bb020e.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Managing for Results at FAO – Orientation Guide (internal document).

<sup>5</sup> Note that prioritization of SDGs is the government responsibility, and that an SDG target at that level can only be referenced if the Government has agreed to adopt/adopted it.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  | cutting themes (gender, nutrition, governance and climate change adaptation).  |
| 3) Implementation, monitoring and reporting arrangements | Total resource requirements for the CPF implementation, specific partnerships, institutional arrangements for monitoring of the CPF implementation.    |
| 4) Annexes   | Annex 1: CPF results and resource requirements matrix.<br>Annex 2: UN-system linkage.<br>Annex 3: Technical Cooperation Programme indicative pipeline. |

*Source: The Guide to the formulation of the CPF (2017)*

9. The CPF cycle comprises three phases: first, formulation and approval, which includes consultations led by the FAO Representative (FAOR) with the Government and key partners as well as analysis of national needs, policies and programmes, in order to set programme priorities. Assistance is provided by the country support team (composed of the regional CPF focal point, lead technical officers in the regional office, and in some cases, staff from headquarters, under the coordination of the Regional Programme Leader. The main product of this phase is the CPF itself, which is subject to review by the relevant Strategic Programme leaders and endorsement by the Regional Representative.
10. The second and third phases of the CPF cycle are implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the CPF. The roles and responsibilities played by each actor are normally determined in the CPF itself. The FAOR together with the Government and other development partners are usually responsible for monitoring progress through annual or ad hoc consultations. A sample of country programmes are also evaluated either by the Office of Evaluation (OED) or with the Office's support in coordination with the Regional Offices.

## 1.2 Objective, scope and methodology

### 1.2.1 Objective

11. The main objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the CPF as a management tool for FAO country level programming. Key aspects reviewed are:
  - **Clarity of concept and adequacy of the CPF process:** To what extent the CPF was fit for purpose? How effectively has the CPF been formulated and overseen?
  - **Operational utility of the CPF:** Was the CPF used to foster partnerships and to leverage country office resources? How effectively has the CPF monitoring and evaluation been?
  - **Programmatic utility of the CPF:** To what extent did it help bringing focus on results and promote results-based management? Have these helped advancing FAO's agenda on gender and SDGs?

### 1.2.2 Scope

12. This study covers CPFs developed since the establishment of the CPFs (2011-November 2017). Findings of 21 Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs) conducted by the Office of Evaluation (OED) between 2011 and 2017 covered the first generation of CPFs (2011-2015). Given the major revisions made to the CPF guide in 2015, all the 55 CPFs developed since then were reviewed in detail, and the findings triangulated with the analyses of CPFs effectiveness made in the evaluations of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices (2011-2014) and selected reports.

### 1.2.3 Data sources

13. Evidence has been largely obtained from document reviews, interviews and surveys.
14. **Document review:** Key sources of information included CPEs, relevant audit reports, FAOR annual reports, Office of Strategy, Planning and Resources Management (OSP) guidance notes, Country Gender Assessments (CGAs), and FAO country programming policies. Data available in the Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support System (PIRES) and the Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) was also analysed. The list of documents consulted is available in Appendix 1.
15. **Interviews:** Consultations with FAO management, including the Deputy Director-General for Programmes, the Deputy Director-General for Operations, the Office of Strategy, Planning and Resources Management (OSP), the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), and the Office of Support to Decentralized Offices (OSD), were held. In addition, selected FAORs, staff in regional offices supporting CPF development, the headquarter teams working on investment and gender, and World Food Programme (WFP) strategic planning unit were interviewed. The list of people consulted is found in Appendix 2.
16. **Surveys:** A survey was administered between December 2017 and January 2018 to gather feedback on the CPF from FAORs in 55 countries that developed CPFs based on the guidance issued in 2015. The overall rate of response was 38 percent (21 FAORs).<sup>6</sup> The survey instrument is available in Appendix 3.

### 1.2.4 Methodology

17. To assess the **clarity of concept**, the team analysed the format and structure of the post-2015 CPFs against the various country development contexts and the balance between the dual purpose of the CPF, and used the evidence gathered from the FAORs survey.
18. To assess the **adequacy of the process**, the team analysed findings from past CPEs<sup>7</sup> and identified examples where the guidance provided was either not understood or followed. It then used the FAOR survey and followed up with selected FAORs to enquire whether key features of the CPF guidance could be improved. The latter also involved asking whether the level and quality of support from regional and subregional entities was adequate. To validate the evidence gathered, the team reviewed the 55 approved CPFs according to five criteria: i) quality of context analysis; ii) linkages with national priorities; iii) clarity of FAO contributions (narrative); iv) result matrix analysis (including the integration of SDGs); and v) quality of CPF indicators. As a whole, these criteria cover the key sections of the CPF. The full assessment can be found in Appendix 4.
19. The team assessed the **operational utility of the CPF** as a tool to orient and shape the resource mobilization efforts done at the country level. The team analysed the ratio of the estimated resource requirements, i.e. the resource mobilization target specified in the 55

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<sup>6</sup> This is an acceptable response rate according to the literature regarding online surveys (NULTY, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Past CPEs conducted by the Office of Evaluation (OED): Lao PDR, Burkina Faso, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Tanzania, Pakistan, Myanmar, Kenya, West Bank and Gaza, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kirgizstan, Eastern Caribbean States and Barbados, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and Colombia.

CPFpost-2015<sup>8</sup> against the cumulative field programme delivery<sup>9</sup> in the last years of the correspondent CPF cycle, as obtained in FPMIS. Based on this information, a proxy indicator was used to assess how realistic the resource mobilization targets were based on the past programme delivery. The full assessment can be found in Appendix 5.

20. To assess the programmatic utility of the CPF as a strategic tool to promote results-based management for the country programme, the team analysed the result orientation of the CPF result matrix of the post 2015 CPFs. As for the CPF utility to plan, forecast and report against corporate outputs,<sup>10</sup> the team collected the corporate indicators reported in the 2016-2017 biennium and the planned indicators for the 2018-2019 biennium, and analysed the consistency of the reported/planned indicators against the CPF outputs. The full assessment can be found in Appendix 6.

### **1.3 Limitations**

21. The synthesis is not a fully-fledged evaluation of the CPF. It focuses on selected aspects of the CPF process that have influenced its effectiveness. The synthesis heavily relies on data extrapolated from secondary sources, which may not always reflect the situation to date. The team addressed this limitation by reviewing newer CPFs, more recent reports and gathering/validating information from key informants (mainly FAORs and FAO staff).

### **1.4 Structure of the report**

22. The report is divided into three sections: introduction, findings, and conclusions and recommendations. The introduction (Chapter1) provides a background on the genesis and evolution of the CPF, and the objectives and methodology of the study. The findings section (Chapter 2) presents the analysis of the evidence collected on three aspects of the CPF: clarity of concept and adequacy of the CPF process; its operational and programme utility. The conclusions and recommendations section (Chapter 3) presents a set of conclusive statements and actionable suggestions for improvement.

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<sup>8</sup> The list of the countries with completed (valid) CPFs was collected in FAO workspace in December 2018. These countries are the following: a) Africa: Mozambique, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Benin, Cabo Verde, Eritrea, Gambia, Niger, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Zambia, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Liberia and Chad; b) Asia and the Pacific: Cambodia, Lao PDR, India, China, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Viet Nam; c) Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Turkey, Belarus, Georgia and Tajikistan; d) Latin America and the Caribbean: Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Dominica, Belize, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Uruguay, Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, El Salvador and Guyana; e) Near East and North Africa: Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

<sup>9</sup> Total delivery includes technical cooperation and emergency.

<sup>10</sup> Since 2014, offices must list CPF output targets that are directly linked to corporate outputs (from the FAO Strategic Framework) and CPF results are recorded in the PIREs system.

## 2. Findings

### 2.1 Clarity of concept and adequacy of the process

23. This section explores the clarity of the CPF concept to guide the programme formulation based on informed understanding of the country context and development needs. It also explores the level of understanding of the guidance provided, including the level and quality of support provided to the formulation process. It then explores the level of context analysis undertaken to prepare the CPF and analyses the role of the country support and core teams in support of priority setting and governance of the CPF.

#### 2.1.1 Clarity of concept

**Finding 1. The latest CPF guidelines (2015) are found to be clear, and improved on the previous guidelines especially in the alignment of CPFs with FAO Strategic Framework. At the same time, FAORs noted that the new guidelines, while improved in operationalising the Strategic Framework, provide less scope for country level customisation based on the context and needs.**

24. The concept, format and guidance for the first generation of CPFs (2011-2015) were developed before FAO embarked on the new strategic thinking process in 2012 to revise the 2010-2019 Strategic Framework. Consequently, these CPFs were conceived prior to the rollout of the current results-based management approach, and their full alignment with the new Strategic Framework cannot be expected as a matter of course.
25. The new CPF guidelines (2015) provided the CPFs with a dual purpose: integrating FAO's work at country level with the FAO Strategic Framework while addressing government priorities. The new guidelines and format warranted the link with the Strategic Framework, which is done at the output level through the CPF indicator target and the Strategic Framework corporate output indicator. The new guidelines also focused on national priorities as defined by the Government, while explaining that defining country outcomes can be optional.
26. At the institutional level, the links between projects results and CPF results matrix are not included in the results matrix, since the new CPF guidelines do not address this topic. The current available tool (FPMIS) exclusively connects projects to the Strategic Framework, although project documents specify the CPF country output to which it contributes.
27. As noted earlier, CPF guidelines have changed overtime. In that process, it is natural that some of the guidance provided was not reflected in all CPFs. In 2016, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG)<sup>11</sup> found that some CPFs were still incomplete with compulsory parts missing, such as a results matrix or monitoring framework, and there was often no documentary trail of quality assurance or multidisciplinary reviews.
28. While the latest CPF guidelines are found clear, FAORs noted that the post-2015 CPF concept and guidelines were more rigid and geared towards operationalizing the Strategic Framework with limited scope for customization based on the country context and needs – for instance

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<sup>11</sup> AUD 0417 - Capping Report on the Implementation of FAO's Strategic Framework at the Decentralized Offices 2016.



to reflect variations in public administration,<sup>12</sup> development situation<sup>13</sup> and fragility.<sup>14</sup> On a positive note, when and as needed the post-2015 CPF guidelines made the CPF revision process easier and clearer, in order to address sudden changes in country context and country priorities.

29. According to the survey responded by 21 FAORs, the clarity of the current CPF guidelines is satisfactory. The majority of FAORs (70 percent) consider the guidelines clear and easy to follow, while 18 percent responded that some clarifications were needed and 5 percent that some parts were not easy to follow. From the interviews with FAORs and past evaluation findings, it also emerged that while the clarity of the guidelines facilitated alignment with the Strategic Framework, it did not provide enough guidance for result-based management of country programmes (refer to discussion on programmatic utility).

### 2.1.2 Setting priorities

**Finding 2. FAORs generally expressed satisfaction with the support received in the CPF formulation. FAO's technical and operational knowledge was however not always put to full use in supporting country office identify strategic priorities with the government.**

30. The CPF guidance describes the process of setting priorities as resulting from dialogue with government decision makers, which in turn is based on relevant preliminary context analysis. The country support teams, established under the responsibility of the Regional Programme Leader, are expected to play a major role in supporting this process.
31. Among the FAORs surveyed for this study, 71 percent reported that the level of support they received for the formulation of the CPFs was sufficient (Figure 2), while 81 percent rated the quality of the support as either excellent (38 percent) or good (43 percent) (figure 3). In particular, FAORs emphasized the strong engagement from Regional Offices and Strategic Programme teams. Nevertheless, in 29 percent of the cases the support provided was considered limited.

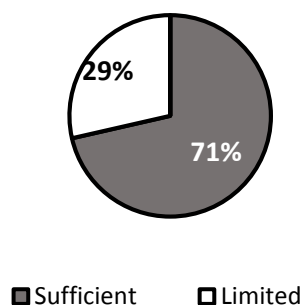
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<sup>12</sup> Centralized vs devolved (the latter is when subnational administrations strategize, plan and manage their own resources autonomously from the central government, including public service delivery, agriculture sector and extension).

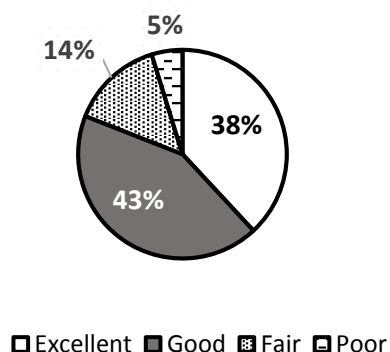
<sup>13</sup> Refers to such categories as: least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, middle-income countries, and small island developing states.

<sup>14</sup> Refers to fragile situations, conflict-affected situations, transitional situations, and subnational fragile situations (caused by protracted man-made conflicts or natural disasters).

**Figure 2:** Level of support the country received to formulate the CPF



**Figure 3:** Quality of the support received to formulate the CPF



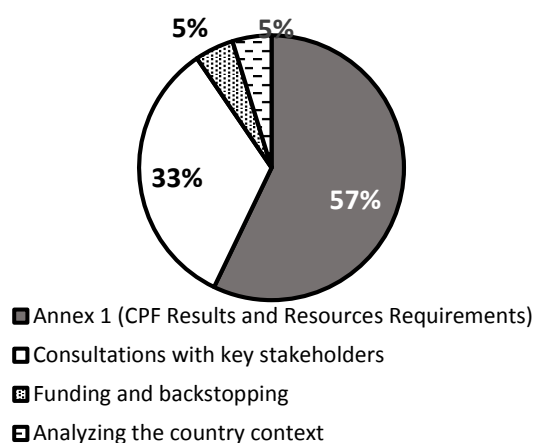
Source: Elaborated by the team based on information gathered from the FAORs online survey

32. Priority setting is at the core of the CPF since it determines the orientation of FAO's future work in the country. Some CPEs<sup>15</sup> (Lao PDR, Cote d'Ivoire) noted that priority setting was not always based on adequate dialogue or context analysis.
- In the Lao PDR CPE, it was found that the ambitious agenda included in the CPF was not implemented as expected. FAO's programme had been driven mainly by projects; many stakeholders were not aware of the strategic directions of the CPF.
  - The Côte d'Ivoire CPE noted that the CPF included a good analysis of the most important constraints affecting the agriculture sector. However, there was a divergence between the narrative of the document and the results matrix.
33. The 2015 revised guidelines suggest a set of criteria to facilitate priority setting: a) mandate to act; b) position to act; and c) capacity to act, and gave the FAOR, with the support of the CPF country team, the responsibility to conduct this process.
34. Some FAORs noted that the process of priority setting does not always get the needed attention from the wider FAO technical structure at the inception phase. The country support teams often review the programmatic aspects of a draft CPF at a later stage, rather than actively contributing to the needs assessment and supporting the identification of entry points to provide technical and functional assistance based on adequate context analysis. Furthermore, some technical units such as the Investment Centre Division (TCI) or the Gender team at headquarters were not often involved in the provision of support.
35. Greater involvement of country support teams that include FAO staff from different expertise and locations, and at earlier stages of CPF development, could help increase the quality of the prioritization process and CPF design. The lack of it could result in FAORs facing a broad profile of requests based on immediate technical gaps and/or assistance on sector-specific issues, as have been found in a number of country programme evaluations.

<sup>15</sup> These CPFs precede the revision of the guidelines in 2015 but illustrate typical challenges and pitfalls in the CPF prioritization process.

36. According to FAORs, the preparation of CPF results and resources requirements (Annex 1 of the CPF, also known as the Results Matrix) is by far the most challenging step (Figure 4). The 2015 CPF guidelines do not require country offices to define country outcomes, although the majority of the post-2015 CPFs reviewed have some form of country outcome or national priorities. The guidance and support on how to define CPF country outcomes at attainable outcome level would be needed for proper results-based management at the country level. This issue is discussed in more detail in section 3 (programmatically utility).

**Figure 4:** Most challenging steps in formulating the CPF



Source: Elaborated by the team based on information gathered from the FAORs online survey

### 2.1.3 Context analysis

**Finding 3. It is not evident that the CPFs are based on adequate context analysis and information, such as on sectoral data, economic and political environment, and opportunities for collaboration with partners.**

37. The CPF guidelines request country offices to collect country intelligence – such as macroeconomic, political and social indicators, and include a short context description as part of the introduction. This is mainly done to guide priority setting and keep the CPF process as light as possible.
38. In an era when development problems and constraints are becoming more complex to address, and common targets have been set to ensure nobody is left behind,<sup>16</sup> evidence-based and results-oriented programming are becoming increasingly important to ensure an adequate response and best use of resources. Nine CPEs found that CPFs were based on weak analyses and prioritization, in spite of the availability of analysis and data from sectoral ministries and partners. Thus, the rationale guiding FAO's interventions, and whether these took into account medium-term changes in the socio-economic and political landscape or key development challenges in the relevant sectors, was not always clear (see Box 2).

**Box 2:** Context analysis in CPEs: examples of Pakistan, Kenya, Myanmar and South Sudan

The CPEs of Pakistan and Kenya found that the CPF period coincided with the process of transitioning to a devolved governance system. Since both CPFs lacked the political economy analysis to anticipate such

<sup>16</sup> The SDGs approved in 2016 include 17 goals and 232 indicators to measure progress.

events, FAO missed the chance to position its programme to adapt to and engage with the fluid nature of the devolution process, which included competing priorities and resource constraints. Similarly, the Myanmar CPE found that the CPF lacked a clear and detailed analysis of the main national priorities. These priorities should have been identified by defining critical gaps in areas of FAO's comparative advantage. Except for the crop sector, however, the other sub-sectors were not analysed accurately. In the absence of such an analysis, there was not a clear rationale guiding FAO's interventions.

The South Sudan CPE found that the CPF did not devote enough attention to preparedness, building flexibility into programming that was appropriate to the volatile context of South Sudan, and ensuring emergency programming is more informed by the resilience paradigm. Although the CPF acknowledges that the "country is prone to shocks on a regular basis", additional clarity was needed on the flexibility that may be required to move from development to emergency programming within a particular geographic location due to conflict.

*Source: Elaborated by the authors based on information gathered from CPEs*

39. To strengthen context analysis, in 2015 FAO introduced a tool on "Steps to mainstream the governance perspective along the CPF cycle", which highlights the importance of conducting analysis of "(...) key stakeholders to identify key political, economic and environmental constraints, and to recognize and formulate strategies for overcoming implementation bottlenecks and conflicts". The review of the 55 "post-2015" CPFs found that 32 had some relevant context analysis, while 7 made use of up-to-date analysis of macro and sectoral data in their priority setting. Nevertheless, 16 CPFs did not seem to include relevant context analysis as evidence for prioritization.
40. FAORs noted context analysis helps in understanding the gaps and opportunities in national policies and programmes, and identify strategic priorities and partnership opportunities. In some cases, the team found that FAO country offices use existing context assessments done by national and international partners. Some country offices may already have sufficient knowledge from their previous work, their ongoing projects and, in some cases, this is included in the FAOR annual reports. Still, this was not always evident nor systematic in the CPFs studied.
41. The team noted that agencies like the World Food Programme have recently strengthened their guidance for the development of their Country Strategic Plans,<sup>17</sup> which are informed by national Zero Hunger Strategic Reviews.<sup>18</sup> The latter are conducted jointly with governments and are intended to help WFP country offices aligning their strategic planning to an agreed set of national outcomes and SDG targets.

#### **2.1.4 Governance**

**Finding 4. Once the CPF is formulated, there is not often an effective oversight mechanism at the country level that guides the implementation, based on the performance and the results achieved.**

42. The CPF guidelines recommend the establishment of a country core team (lead formulators from the government and FAO office staff) to support identification of needs, facilitate consultations and bring the national perspective into the CPF. The CPF guidelines do not provide the roles to the country core team and the country support team after the

<sup>17</sup> <http://www1.wfp.org/country-strategic-planning>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www1.wfp.org/zero-hunger-strategic-reviews>

programme formulation. According to the CPF guidelines, FAOR and the host government are to establish a suitable mechanism for monitoring and progress tracing.

43. In six CPEs, it was found that the country core team were a formality, with no paper trail recording the discussions and inputs. In some cases, a steering committee was formed to ensure implementation and monitoring of the CPF, but this was not always the case. For example, the Myanmar CPE found that the CPF was neither used to present the FAO programme to resource partners and other stakeholders, nor to keep track of FAO Myanmar's progress towards the achievement of its stated results.
44. For effective oversight of CPF implementation and results-based management, it would need a mechanism, whether the country core team or steering committees, to review the progress made and provide authoritative guidance on programme implementation and adjustments. Continuing support from the country support team would further ensure the quality. The guidelines could be further enhanced to support FAORs establishing such oversight and support mechanisms.

## 2.2 Operational utility of the CPF

45. This section discusses the extent to which the CPF was conducive to better planning, mobilization of resources as well as more effective monitoring of country programmes.

### 2.2.1 Resource estimation

**Finding 5. The process of setting indicative resource requirements has improved overtime. However, the figures are still overestimated in many cases. There is a credibility risk if the expectations are raised too high.**

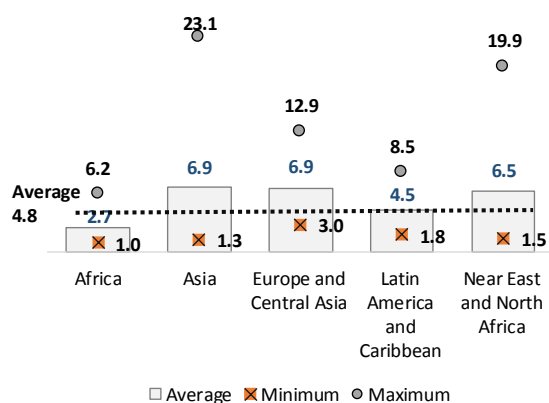
46. An objective of CPFs is to identify realistic resource requirements and mobilization targets. As part of this synthesis, the team examined the level of accuracy of the resource mobilization targets included in CPFs against the actual programme delivery, especially since it was pointed out as one of the more challenging steps in CPF formulation.
47. According to the CPF guidelines, resources are estimated according to what it would take to implement the CPF, and the target sets are validated by Regional Office staff. Some FAORs reported that, while assessing potential funding opportunities, the government budget allocation to a certain sub-sector is a key factor considered in estimating the total CPF amount of required resources.
48. Among the 55 CPFs analysed, only two countries (South Sudan and Zimbabwe) reached their resource mobilization targets. On average, country offices set seemingly unrealistic targets, overestimating approximately by 4.8 times their actual level of delivery. In some cases – Azerbaijan, India,<sup>19</sup> Indonesia, Turkey and Jordan – the overestimation was over ten times higher. By region (Figure 5), country offices in Africa set the most realistic targets (2.7 times), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (4.5 times), Near East and North Africa (6.5 times), Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia (both 6.9 times).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> India's resources estimation was to be delivered in three to seven years.

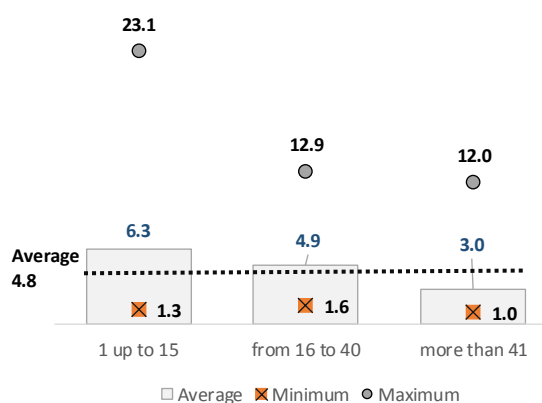
<sup>20</sup> In few cases, the difference between these figures indicates a changing in the nature of the portfolio at the country offices – e.g. from development to emergency or the forecast of non-traditional funds.

49. An inverse relationship was found between the size of the country office and the level of realism of the resource mobilization targets (Figure 6). The larger the country office,<sup>21</sup> the closer the resource target to the actual delivery. This may be the reflection of the fact that smaller offices tend to put their “wishes” that were not realized in the past. It may also explain the fact that the targets were more realistic in Africa, which tended to have larger portfolios and hence larger offices.

**Figure 5:** Indicator by region



**Figure 6:** Indicator by size of the office (# of staff)



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on information gathered from FPMIS (in Dec/2018) and post-2015 CPFs

50. The amount of available resources in the country offices at the time of the CPF formulation – either from projects, TCPs or other sources of funding – do not seem to influence the analysed indicator in a systematic way. No distinct patterns among the regions and different sizes of the country offices were found by the team.
51. Furthermore, a comparison of this indicator over time shows that country offices have in general become better at planning and orienting their resource mobilization strategy. For this exercise, the team selected 29 countries<sup>22</sup> that have CPFs both in the pre-2015 and post-2015 formats<sup>23</sup> (Figures 7 and 8).<sup>24</sup> The overall results indicate that progress has been made towards more realistic estimates of required resources– especially in smaller country offices and in Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Africa has been setting realistic targets during both periods.

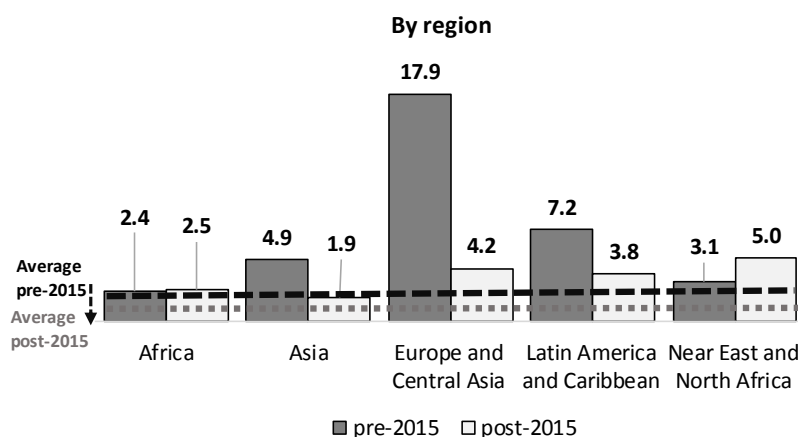
**Figure 7:** Indicator overtime - average by region

<sup>21</sup> The size is measured by the average number of staff members (FAO regular and field staff, as well as government staff) and consultants.

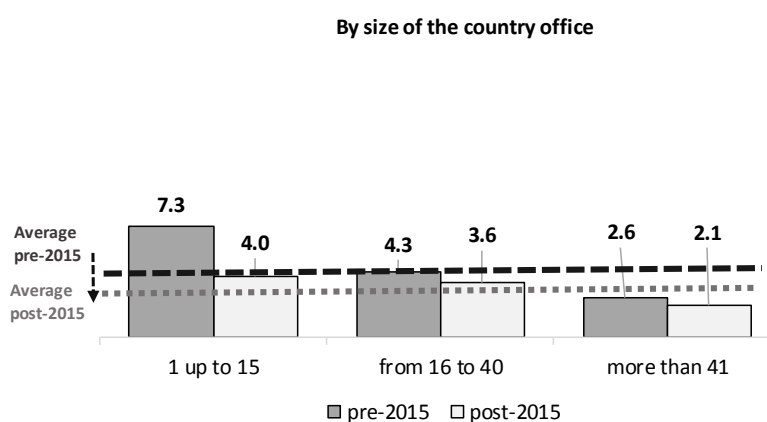
<sup>22</sup> The countries are: a) Africa: Gabon, Swaziland, Cabo Verde, Benin, Tanzania, Zambia, Liberia, Gambia, Niger, Chad, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and the Central African Republic; b) Asia and the Pacific: China, Viet Nam, Afghanistan; c) Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Belarus, Republic of Moldova; d) Latin America and the Caribbean: Santa Lucia, Belize, Barbados, Uruguay and El Salvador; e) Near East and North Africa: Tunisia, Morocco and Lebanon.

<sup>23</sup> For the pre-2015 CPFs, the indicator compared the required resources at the time of the CPF formulation (the CPF as drafted) and the delivery at the end of the CPF implementation (the CPF as implemented).

<sup>24</sup> The differences on the average indicator reported in Figures 7 and 8 are related to the purposive selection of the countries, based on the existence of CPFs with both pre- and post-2015 formats.



**Figure 8:** Indicator overtime - average by size of the country office (# of staff)



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on information gathered from FPMIS (in Dec/2018) and CPFs

52. Even with the improvements in target setting a considerable divergence remains between resource targets and actual delivery. This may suggest that, even with the new CPF guidelines, the guidance, methodology or control for setting realistic resource mobilization targets are not adequate or effective. FAO has made efforts to review and adjust the country offices' resource mobilization targets annually. Tools and guidance were provided to country offices to update and review the projects' resource mobilization targets. However, the adjusted resource mobilization targets are not updated in the CPFs.
53. As pointed out by several FAORs and FAO staff, the mismatch between the resource mobilization targets and the capacity to deliver may affect the trust between FAO and its counterparts – especially governments, since the level of expectation raised is often not achieved. To avoid the credibility risk, the CPFs would need to spell out some realistic scenarios based on different levels of expectations and contingencies.
54. Further, the expenditures of global programmes and regional initiatives are not usually recorded at the country level – even if implemented at the country level. This could provide a distorted picture of the financial situation. For example, in Lao PDR, the recorded delivery was around USD 1.7 million but the actual delivery, including global programmes and regional initiatives, was around USD 5 million.

## 2.2.2 Monitoring and evaluation

**Finding 6. Monitoring of the contribution at the outcome level (CPF country outcomes) is not systematic. The CPF indicators are not generally linked to field programme/project indicators, preventing efficient data collection. The CPF is not systematically used to track progress on results achieved, and to adjust the programme accordingly.**

55. The CPF guidelines note that monitoring and reporting have the dual objective of providing information on progress and making adjustments as needed for achieving the expected results. FAO has two corporate systems for result monitoring and reporting: FPMIS, for project level monitoring; and PIRES, for monitoring and reporting against the strategic framework. In addition, FAORs are expected to track progress and report it in the country annual reports. A number of FAORs noted that the current format and structure of the annual report is mainly focused on reporting activities and outputs, and geared towards corporate reporting, but it is not very suitable for sharing with national counterparts.
56. Some CPEs (the Eastern Caribbean States, Egypt, Guatemala, Honduras and Kyrgyzstan) found that there was no appropriate or systematic tracking of progress, and identified several cases of limited consistency between monitoring of field project indicators and CPF indicators. In the case of Cameroon, although the CPF was accompanied by a monitoring plan and a results matrix, no tracking of progress was conducted.
57. One of the difficulties raised in the CPEs for conducting relevant monitoring was the lack of clearly delineated pathways between the CPF “outputs” and the stated CPF results. Related to this, some CPEs noted the unrealistic indicators chosen to monitor progress and the lack of relevant baseline data and targets.
58. The review of 55 post-2015 CPFs noted that 12 of the 55 CPFs included indicators that measure activities but not results, and 42 of the 55 CPFs lacked baselines data or targets. Some FAORs noted that one of the limitations for measuring results and using the information for decision-making is the country office skill-mix and capacities to adequately implement and track CPF progress.

## 2.2.3 Partnerships

**Finding 7. The CPFs are generally designed in collaboration with government entities. Challenges remain to broaden the array of partners involved and consider them as partners for achieving results.**

59. The CPF guidelines provide guidance for engaging with government and other decision makers on several topics – such as climate change and nutrition. However, limited guidance and support are provided on how to work and manage partnerships with these institutions beyond the approval of the CPF – that is, during the CPF implementation process.
60. Eight CPEs concluded that the CPF formulation process was not inclusive enough (including with some government ministries) and represented missed opportunities for developing stronger partnerships at strategic levels. More partners could have been involved in the formulation of the CPF in order to broaden the analysis and the diversity of perspectives; donors would need to be better consulted for more effective resource mobilization. Similarly, the CPEs found that the involvement of other United Nations agencies and civil society organizations could help establish policy dialogues and explore partnership opportunities.



61. **Partnerships with the government.** Regional Office staff and FAORs described three challenges affecting the CPF formulation and implementation in this regard. First, in most cases, FAO's mandate is broader than that of the Ministry of Agriculture. Second, the planning responsibilities and decisions on budgetary commitments from national resources (or development aid resources under government control) are often the responsibility of other ministries or planning agencies. Third, the mandate on topics such as climate change, natural resource management or rural development is given to a wide array of ministries and in some cases to the offices of the president or the prime minister. The lack of mechanisms to support regular engagement with partners (i.e., beyond the approval of the CPF) might have hindered a deeper involvement of partners in CPF implementation.
62. **Partnerships with the United Nations Development System.** In 2017, the Secretary-General of the United Nations announced a reform agenda of the United Nations Development System at the country level. This reform agenda, which is still unfolding and evolving in 2018, builds on the SDGs, Paris and Accra Declarations on aid effectiveness and the call for a more coordinated and harmonized United Nations Development System at the country level.
63. The CPF guidelines also dedicate an annex (Annex 2: UN-system linkage) for country offices to describe FAO's positioning within the United Nations Development System, focusing on FAO's engagement in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes and implementation. Most of the CPFs reviewed contained a limited description of FAO's work in the United Nations Country Team. However, the team found in some FAOR Annual Reports detailed reports of collaboration with other agencies, including:
- In Bangladesh, FAO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) developed a strategic framework for operationalizing One Health approaches for prevention and control of high impact diseases, jointly supporting pilot projects, workshops and collaborative efforts.
    - In Kenya, FAO supported nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food safety components in the UNICEF complementary feeding guide.
    - In South Sudan, FAO introduced new approaches piloting nutrition voucher schemes, partnering with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF and WFP to deliver rapid response kits.
64. The existing country level collaboration between FAO, IFAD and WFP was evident in multiple evaluations, though predominantly at the project level and through the exchange of knowledge and consultations. The team found only a few examples of programmatic engagement with IFAD and WFP. The team found promising examples of collaboration between WFP and FAO in a programme formulation process to position SDG 2 strategically in their country programmes. Box 3 highlights several examples.

**Box 3:** Collaboration between FAO and WFP on country programming

- **Afghanistan:** The National Zero Hunger Strategic Review was co-funded by FAO. The two agencies have also signed an agreement to support a Secretariat for the Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda.
- **Cambodia:** The National Zero Hunger Strategic Review process is supported by a technical support group, and FAO is part of its Secretariat. Through this review, FAO and WFP seek to align their programmes with the UNDAF 2019-2023.

- **Cote d'Ivoire:** FAO and WFP are working together on both the National Zero Hunger Strategic Review and the improvement of monitoring and reporting on SDG2 and related SDG targets and indicators.
- **Gambia:** FAO co-facilitated and co-financed the National Zero Hunger Strategic Review. FAO participates in the Advisory Board and also assumes the Secretariat of the Review with WFP.

*Source: Elaborated by the authors based on information gathered from post-2015 CPFs*

## 2.3 Programmatic utility of the CPF

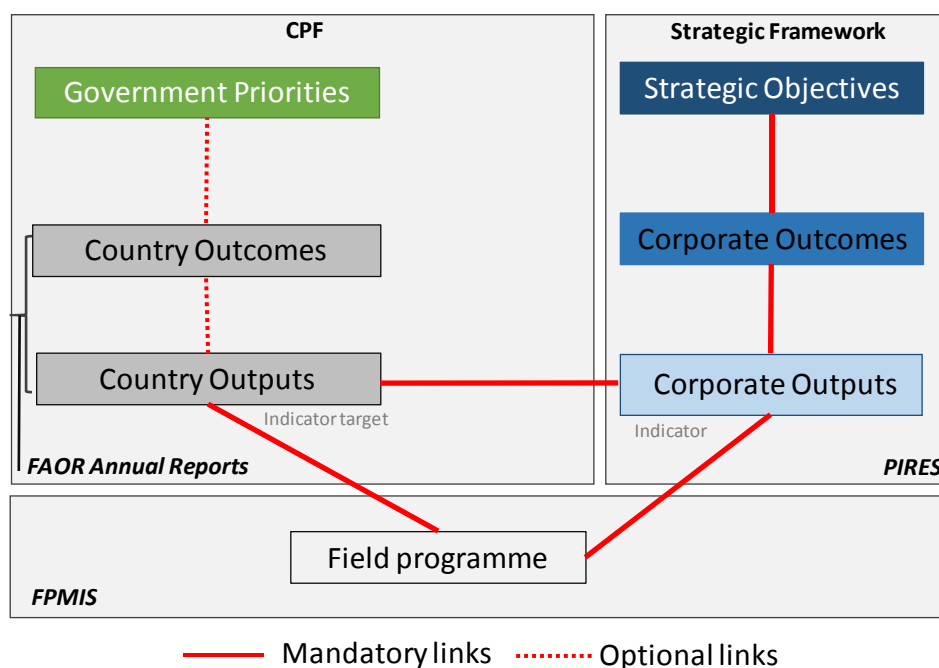
65. This section explores the result-based management aspects of the CPF in terms its utility to fulfil its dual purpose; strengthening the result-based management at country level (alignment of field programme with the national priorities) and at global level (alignment of country level results with those set-up in the Strategic Framework). It also reviews progress in promoting gender equality and contributions to the SDGs through the CPFs.

### 2.3.1 Results-based management

**Finding 8. At the country level, the CPFs and their results framework generally lack the theory of change that explains how the country programme would contribute to the national priorities. At the corporate level, the current generation of CPFs has improved on the alignment with the Strategic Framework with coherence ensured at the output level. The use of outputs for performance measuring and target setting is not conducive to results-based management at the country level.**

66. The CPF results chain, shown in Figure 9, comprises government priorities, country outcomes (if available) and country outputs; the latter are linked to the corporate outputs indicator. The field programme, i.e. FAO's portfolio of projects at country level that contribute to the CPF country outcomes (if defined), are also linked to FAO's corporate outputs, as well as to the CPF outputs.

**Figure 9:** CPF results chain



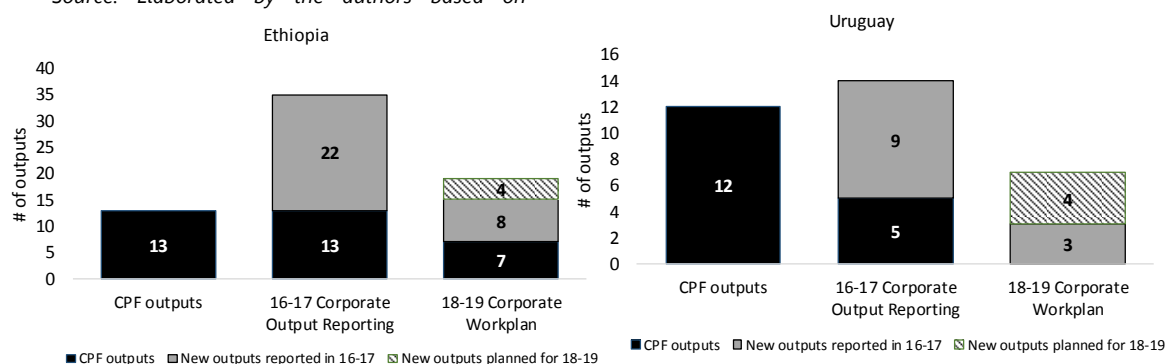
Source: Elaborated by the authors

67. The basis for a result-based management system at country level is outlined in the CPF, mainly in the second section of the CPF (FAO's contribution and expected results) and in Annex 1 (the Result Matrix).
68. The current CPF guidelines state that the definition of country outcomes is optional. If a CPF does not have well-defined attainable outcomes,<sup>25</sup> it risks creating a floating field programme without a point of reference to manage it based on results achieved. Government priorities are normally defined at a higher level with a broader scope and as such cannot be used as the main point of reference in managing the FAO programme.
69. The team found that the majority of the reviewed post-2015 CPFs defined country outcomes but did not include outcome level indicators. Likewise, it is not evident that CPFs are supported by theories of change to illustrate how the FAO programme would yield results that would in turn contribute to government priorities.
70. Another objective of the CPFs is to ensure alignment of FAO's work at country level with collective global agenda of member countries as articulated in the FAO Strategic Framework (corporate results). The CPF indicator target and the corporate outputs indicator are the main planning, monitoring and reporting element of the CPF from this perspective. FAO has a corporate system (PIRES) that enables country offices to record planned results every two years and report back outputs every year.
71. The team compared the outputs reported for 2016-2017 and planned for 2018-2019, against the CPF outputs target. It was found that all 55 countries with a post-2015 CPF have deviated from the agreed CPF indicator targets by introducing new outputs and reporting against a lower number of CPF outputs. Figure 10 shows some examples. The analysis for all post-2015 CPF countries can be found in Appendix 6.

<sup>25</sup> These outcomes could be attained through a joint effort among FAO and partners, including the government.

**Figure 10:** Examples of inconsistency between CPF and corporate outputs: Ethiopia and Uruguay

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on



information gathered from PIREs and post-2015 CPFs.

72. The 2016 Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Capping Report on the Implementation of FAO's Strategic Framework at the country offices analysed the root causes and bottlenecks limiting the coherence between the Strategic Programmes and Regional Initiatives and the CPF. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) analysis is in line with the team's analysis presented in Figure 10, regarding the misalignments among country office outputs that had been identified and recorded in PIREs compared to the CPF outputs.
73. These inconsistencies expose some issues relating to the target-setting based on outputs. The CPF is a tool that broadly defines the programme objectives and the results to be achieved during the medium-term, explaining the rationale and the theory behind them, and the strategy to achieve them. On the other hand, the projects and activities composing the field programme have varying origin and life span. Therefore, there will be inconsistencies if the CPF was considered as a collection of projects and activities to produce a set number of outputs. This evidence does not undermine the quality or the relevance of the country office results and body of work; rather, it questions the relevance of making output level targets in the CPF results matrix as the main driver to manage-by-results at the country level.

### 2.3.2 Integrating SDGs

**Finding 9. Integration of SDGs is in progress nationally as well as in the FAO country programming. Future CPFs needs to pay attention to this aspect.**

74. The SDGs embody global commitments to be delivered through actions at the national level by setting progressive development milestones for 2030. They apply to all countries, result from a bottom-up process and address key development issues. SDGs are progressively being internalized in national development programmes/plans, in part through the adoption of SDG targets and indicators.
75. Since April 2017, the CPF guidelines provide deeper guidance on the integration of SDGs at the level of country outputs, and from 2018 FAO's revised Strategic Objectives have incorporated selected SDG targets and indicators.<sup>26</sup>
76. FAO globally has a strong mandate in relation to the SDGs. It is a custodian agency for 21 SDG indicators<sup>27</sup> for which it is responsible to compile data from countries while also

<sup>26</sup> FAO Programme of work and budget 2018-19 (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-ms278e.pdf>).

<sup>27</sup> FAO and the SDGs, 2017 (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6919e.pdf>).

supporting national capacities for data collection. FAO's work directly contributes to 25 SDG indicators while providing indirect contributions to several others. There are seven SDGs directly related to agriculture and natural resource management (SDG 1, 2, 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15), plus another four addressed as cross-cutting (SDG 5, 7, 8 and 17).

77. Devising national SDG target-setting and implementation plans is a national process and cannot be imposed by any external agent. Even though many countries have internalized the SDGs, many other countries are still in the rolling-out stage. Some countries have committed to prepare national voluntary reviews<sup>28</sup> which should ideally be based on assessments of progress towards the achievement of SDGs. Agencies such as FAO are well positioned to support such exercises, especially around SDG-related outcomes included in the CPFs. The CFP can also benefit from the information and analysis conducted during such reviews.

### 2.3.3 Integrating gender issues

#### **Finding 10. Integration of gender dimension to the CPFs through Country Gender Assessments was uneven, both in timing and in quality.**

78. The CPF guidelines acknowledge the importance of gender mainstreaming. In compliance with FAO's Policy on Gender Equality, Country Gender Assessments are prepared by country offices to analyse gender dimensions, existing inequalities and challenges in the agricultural and rural sectors. These reports aim at identifying areas where FAO and partners could best play a role in addressing gender issues.
79. To date, FAO has conducted 47<sup>29</sup> CGAs. Out of this, 13 (24 percent) countries with a post-2015 CPF have done a CGA – Armenia, Chad, China, Gabon, Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Niger, El Salvador, Tajikistan, Turkey, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In four countries – Armenia, Gabon, El Salvador and Zambia - the CGA preceded the CPFs. In six countries – Chad, Lebanon, Niger, Mozambique, Tajikistan and Turkey - the CGA and the CPF were formulated and released within few months apart. In three countries – China, Liberia and Zimbabwe - the CGA came after the CPF.
80. In the ten countries where the CGAs were undertaken before or during the formulation of the CPFs, national gender policies as well as other relevant regulatory frameworks were specified and detailed in the CPF. However, the analysis often lacked gender-disaggregated information/data to support the assessment – with the exception of Armenia and El Salvador, in which a large dataset of sex-disaggregated data is embedded into the context analysis. In these ten CPFs, a gender-responsive perspective was reflected in the CPF priority areas. However, there is still room for improvement when it comes to gender-disaggregated indicators.
81. Some CPEs also found that capacity at country office level was still an issue for the effective promotion of gender equity and mainstreaming. In Guatemala and Nicaragua, for example, FAO has begun to take steps to integrate gender mainstreaming into its programme in a systematic way, but faces challenges to provide systematic technical support to public institutions.

<sup>28</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/nationalreviews>

<sup>29</sup> The team only received 22 Country Gender Assessments.

## 3. Conclusions and recommendations

### 3.1 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1. In the last few years, FAO reformed country level programming based on institutional adaptive learning. However, the CPF has not yet received the full support it merits from the whole of FAO. FAO has the knowledge and means to ensure CPF priorities are based on the best contextual and technical knowledge available.**

3. In the last few years, FAO reformed country level programming based on institutional adaptive learning. As part of this process, it has developed CPF guidance and tools that are comprehensive, well-prepared and clear; yet, the guidance has not always translated into the expected action. There is consensus that better technical and functional support could be provided to enhance “pre-CPF” preparation and CPF implementation.
4. As recommended by recent strategic evaluations,<sup>30</sup> FAO could step up its support and team-up with Government and local actors in order to ensure CPFs are based on relevant analyses of local contexts and development drivers. FAO could also engage at an earlier stage (when development plans are formulated) by contributing inputs to national/thematic diagnosis, voluntary reviews or common country assessments. FAO technical capacities put it in an advantageous position to contribute to such processes.
5. In view of the multifaceted elements of the SDGs and the multidisciplinary actions required for the transformational changes advocated by FAO, CPFs formulation require systematic and quality context analysis (and when needed, a conflict analysis). CPFs also need to be informed by well-facilitated and inclusive consultations, and closely monitored by appropriate Governance structures. This should enable FAO to position itself across government and local stakeholders as a strategic and credible development partner.

**Conclusion 2. The CPF is not yet an effective instrument for resource mobilization, monitoring and oversight. The CPF tends to lose its relevance in actual implementation due to the lack of tools and capacities to support a programmatic approach and unrealistic estimation of resources.**

6. The programmatic approach embodied in the CPF concept requires strategic management for formulation, programme positioning and implementation. This involves ensuring FAO's means (human and financial resources, and technical and functional capacities) are aligned and mobilized towards effective contribution to country outcomes.
7. While setting resource mobilization targets high may be a manifestation of FAO's commitment to make larger impact in the country, too ambitious targets may result in credibility risk because of the raised expectations of the partners.

**Conclusion 3. The CPFs are now better aligned to the FAO Strategic Framework, but still haven't provided a solid basis for results-based management at the country level. Central to the programme approach that allows effective results-based management is the attention to the CPF country outcomes and an integral results chain linking the country outcomes upwards to national objectives and SDGs, supported by rigorous context analysis, and**

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<sup>30</sup> Evaluation of FAO's contribution to rural poverty reduction (Recommendation 3); available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd600e.pdf>.

**downwards to FAO field programme and other activities, which provide infrastructure for the CPF management.**

8. At the organizational level, the CPF is expected to be the tool for effective planning and priority setting for FAO's corporate results at the country level. So far attention has been paid to ensuring the alignment of CPF outputs with corporate outputs, with mixed results, while sufficient attention hasn't been paid to strategic planning and priority setting at the country level.
9. The CPFs could evolve to better serve results-based management at the country level by being better anchored in theories of changes that explain how the field programme and outputs contribute to attainable country outcomes, that will in turn contribute to national objectives and SDGs. The theories of change should also reflect attainable outcomes that contribute to other corporate objectives such as gender equality and environmental sustainability.

### **3.2 Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1. FAO should enhance the CPF process by increasing attention to context analysis, stakeholder engagement and governance arrangements.**

Suggested actions:

- Country support teams should be formalized and include staff that have worked closely with the country or have expertise relevant to the country.
- Country support teams should assist with context analysis, need assessments or national-led studies of strategic nature with a view to providing solid basis for strategic prioritization and programme design.
- CPFs should have a steering committee, comprising of representatives from the government, FAO and other key partners.

**Recommendation 2. FAO should enhance capacities and tools for estimation of resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation.**

Suggested actions:

- Enhance guidance for establishing well-explained resource mobilization targets and their quality assurance methods.
- Include monitoring and evaluation plans in the CPFs.

**Recommendation 3. FAO should strengthen the CPFs as an effective instrument for the results-based management at the country level.**

Suggested actions:

- Specify attainable country level outcomes in CPFs, based on well-defined theories of change, linking the field programme to national objectives.
- Use outcomes rather than outputs as the main point of reference in measuring performance and setting targets for the CPFs.
- Ensure timely production and use of Country Gender Assessments in the CPFs.

The full report (including appendices) of this synthesis are available on the Office of Evaluation's Website: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/en/>

**List of Appendices**

Appendix 1. List of documents consulted

Appendix 2. List of people interviewed

Appendix 3. Questionnaire – FAOR survey

Appendix 4. Document review of CPFs (post-2015)

Appendix 5. Resource estimation analysis

Appendix 6. CPF reporting consistency