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Evaluation of FAO's cooperation with the Republic of Armenia

Follow-up Report

August 2014

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Office of Evaluation (OED)

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For further information on this report, please contact:

Director, OED
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 1, 00153
Rome, Italy
Email: evaluation@fao.org

Follow-up report of the Management response to the Evaluation of FAO's Cooperation with the Republic of Armenia

22 August 2014

Overall information

FAO management welcomed the Evaluation, which assessed FAO's cooperation with the Republic of Armenia. To a large extent, the findings from the evaluation in Armenia were also integrated in the final report of the REU-SEC evaluation, finalized at the end of 2012.

Management endorsed the Evaluation process and methodology and appreciated its forward-looking approach in focusing on the impacts of the on-going reform for a country office without a resident FAO Representative who is also accredited to two additional countries and is also the Deputy Regional Representative.

Management accepted that the recommendations of the Evaluation provided a good basis for defining a consensual agenda for change for FAO's cooperation with Armenia. The Evaluation provided constructive ideas on strengthening FAO's cooperation with the Republic of Armenia. While Management agreed with the main Evaluation findings and recommendations, implementation was conditioned by changes related to the new project cycle and changes to the Field Programme Manual, the Director-General's bulletin on travel and the introduction of GRMS at the country level.

The Evaluation Report contained five recommendations. Management accepted all recommendations. The FAOR, AFAOR, alternate FAOR, Technical Officers in REU and Headquarters and project staff were working closely with the Government of Armenia on the follow-up actions (please see Matrix with MAR column below).

It is too early to ascertain a lasting change.

Matrix with Management Action Records (MAR) column

| Accepted evaluation recommendations | Action Agreed | Comments on actions taken, including reasons for actions not taken | Impact (changes) of actions taken in terms of programme, policies and/or procedures | MAR score (see below) ¹ |
|--|--|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Recommendation 1 - To the Government of Armenia and FAO, on the status of the Organization The Republic of Armenia and FAO should urgently act for the Organization to become a fully accredited specialized agency of the UN in Armenia, to allow smoother and more efficient performance of the Organization in the country. | Describe Action(s) FAO Representative will raise this issue with the Armenian Government during his next mission | Follow-up actions were taken regarding the current FAO status in the country which depends on the ratification of Geneva Convention on Privileges and Immunities of UN Specialized Agencies in the absence of a Host Country Agreement with the Government. As soon as the Convention is ratified FAO as a specialized agency will be granted respective privileges and immunities although this is unlikely to happen soon due to issues beyond FAO's control as per exchange with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this regard. Therefore parallel to this, relevant actions have been taken to sign an Agreement between Armenia and FAO to shorten the approval process of new projects. The draft Agreement prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been submitted to the FAO Legal Office for comments but no response from LEG has been received to date. In addition, a FAO Host Country Agreement (HCA) is being discussed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Ministry of Agriculture. | | 3 |
| Recommendation 2 - To FAO, on FAO Representative in Armenia FAO should urgently revise the job-description of the nonresident FAO Representative for Armenia, who should be able to visit the | REU agrees that more physical presence is required by the FAOR. However, given multiple responsibilities of the FAOR a better alternative would be to share this responsibility with | The FAO Representative made one visit in 2013, one visit in March 2014; one more visit is planned for the second half of the current year. The Alternate FAOR made four visits in 2013; one visit at end of June 2014 and two visits are planned this year. | | 5 |

¹ **1 - None:** no action was taken to implement the recommendation; **2 - Poor:** plan and actions for implementation of the recommendation are at a very preliminary stage; **3 - Inadequate:** implementation of the recommendation is uneven and partial; **4 - Adequate:** implementation of the recommendation has progressed; there is no evidence yet of its results on the intended target; **5 - Good:** the recommendation has been fully implemented and there is some initial evidence of its impact on the intended target; **6 – Excellent:** there is proven evidence that the recommendation has had a positive impact on its intended target.

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| country at least six to eight weeks per year and fulfill his/her mandate by providing strategic guidance for the work of the Organization in the country, effectively developing and coordinating the field programme, participating in UNCT meetings and carrying out advocacy and communication activities. | the alternate FAOR and the two work as a team to ensure appropriate coverage. Emphasis will be given to increased coordination of the field programme and UNCT liaison. | | | |
| Recommendation 3 - To FAO, on its operational set-up in Armenia FAO should revise the operational set-up of FAO in Armenia in terms of roles and responsibilities as follows: a) Bringing all projects under the operational responsibility of the Assistant FAO Representative; b) Through AOS resources originating from the national projects, or direct costs charged to project budgets, recruit 2 support staff for operations and administration; c) Enhance the technical competence of the office, through better focused and specialized profiles and terms of reference of project coordinators, in support of the priority areas of the Country Programming Framework. | The operation set-up will be developed by REU and FAO Armenia. Review of operational capacities has been initiated. Workflow within GRMS is under definition and operational responsibility will be provided to the office in a phased approach. To strengthen the operational capacity of country office, a redelegation of authority under MS 502 and MS 507, in an amount of 10,000 USD, to the AFAOR has been granted CSAD. The number of additional support staff will be subject to the AOS resources available. | There was a delay with opening of the bank account with HSBC Yerevan due to the status of the Organization in the country and it became only available in July 2014. Roles and responsibilities of the staff in GRMS can now be defined by mapping office functions to GRMS, taking segregation of duties into account, and relevant training be provided. | | 4 |
| Recommendation 4 - To the Government of Armenia and FAO, on prioritizing within the CPF. Based on a realistic assessment of resources available and on committed engagement for resources mobilization, the Government and FAO should agree on ranking priorities within the current CPF, so as to focus efforts for the period 2013-2014. In early | REU and MoA have already prioritized, within the current CPF, on which areas to focus efforts for the period 2013-2014. The CPF signed in January 2012 has been reviewed on the basis of the new requirements for CPFs end of 2012 with an increased focus for the period 2013- 2015 setting out six national priorities areas to guide FAO partnership | Based on the signed CPF a working document was prepared for 2013-2015 to operationalize the CPF in close cooperation with the Government, relative parties, stakeholders, etc. The focus areas for that period have been agreed with the Government around six priority areas. | | 5 |

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| 2015, a revision of the CPF should lead to priority setting for additional two years, after which the CPF should be revised in depth. A greater range of stakeholders should also be involved in the CPF monitoring and implementation. | and support with the Government of Armenia from 2013-2015. | | | |
| Recommendation 5 - To FAO, on on-going projects in Armenia FAO must urgently devote the required attention and resources to the successful completion of the projects for Pesticide residue monitoring and quality control (GCP/ARM/003/GRE) and Abattoir development (GCP/ARM/004/GRE) | An additional one year no-cost extension has been submitted to the donor in order to achieve functioning of two fully operational laboratories and five abattoirs with well trained staff. Full attention by the Lead Technical Officers and the Budget Holder will be essential particularly for the procurement of the equipment and the construction of the pesticide laboratory and the abattoirs. | <p>Pesticide residue monitoring and quality control project (GCP/ARM/003/GRE)</p> <p>The Pesticide Residue Monitoring Laboratory is operational after the training conducted and the equipment has been installed although some additional equipment and consumables will be procured. Training is continuing to strengthen the skills of the lab's staff, e.g. recently two staff were trained in Germany and presently Prof. Gong from ICAMA.</p> <p>The construction works for the pesticide formulation laboratory have after a long search for a suitable location which was necessary because the government had no suitable space available.</p> <p>In cooperation with the Pesticide Registration Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture the pesticide related database was created. The database provides data relevant to the registration of pesticides, pesticide imports, manufacturers, etc. The project team has prepared a Pesticide Handbook which contains all the information that farmers need to know about registered pesticides: the list of registered pesticides, their agricultural usage, directions for use, application date, time, rate, crops, target pests, etc..</p> <p>Abattoir Development project (GCP/ARM/004/GRE)</p> <p>The abattoir equipment is being installed in the selected sites.</p> <p>A training plan for five abattoirs was prepared and will be implemented by the supplier. In addition, the project has prepared a capacity building/ training plan for review.</p> | | 5 |