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Expansion of the Farmer Input Support Response Initiative (FISRI) to Rising Prices of Agricultural Commodities in Zambia – GCP /ZAM/071/EC

Management response to evaluation report

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

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**Evaluation Report Management Response for GCP/ZAM/071/EC
Submitted by TCEO/FAO Zambia**

Recommendations	Further funding required (Yes or no)	Acceptance by Management			Comment on the Recommendation	Action to be taken		
		Accepted	Partially Accepted	Rejected		Action	Timing	Organization Unit Responsible
Overall Response to the Evaluation		Accepted			The evaluation achieved its objectives to assess progress made under FISRI I, II & III, identifying areas for improvement and making recommendations for the remaining implementation period of the project. The assessment and recommendations made on the modalities (major design components, implementation approach) of a follow-up phase or replication phase of the project are fully accepted and will be addressed by the management.	Please see recommendations		
Balance of FISRI III								
Recommendation 1: In the remaining 6 months of FISRI III, address the urgent requirements to improve the governance, M&E and reporting to improve project performance further. This will also assist in the preparation for the transition to CASU (in early 2012) by ensuring adequate systems and procedures are reinforced to maximize the seamless relay from FISRI to CASU in terms of improved integration between MAL and FAO technical backstopping and improved camp-level data collection and analysis under a tighter M&E system (integrated into MAL systems)	No	Accepted				i) Coordination between the different units.	i) Continuous.	FAO Zambia , TCEO playing coordination role.
					ii) A very experienced International Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator will further strengthen the project management team in Lusaka, Zambia.	ii) Transfer process for the International Emergency and Rehabilitation	ii) 1 October 2012.	TCEO

						Coordinator.		
					iii) M&E support from SFS is envisaged for October 2012.	iii) Back stopping and project steering committee meetings.	iii) October 2012	TA: TCEO Programme: FAO Zambia.
Recommendation 2: FAO technical backstopping should be more integrated with MAL system and personnel on an ongoing operational basis. Consideration should be given to the relocation of the existing FAO M&E and Agronomist staff to MAL, and on a semi full-time basis, to better integrate with MAL structures and to provide real-time proactive technical advice and backstopping within MAL in order to: (i) address existing issues for improvement within FISRI; and (ii) prepare the necessary systems and structures that will be required for a "seamless transition" from FISRI to CASU;	NO		Partially Accepted		FAO will increase collaboration with MAL at the District and Provincial levels, formalizing these linkages through MoUs and LoAs and expanding capacity development from individual training to more systematically include the organizational and institutional levels to allow MAL to take over current extension services in the medium term. Work to institutionalize training, i.e. ToRs for supervisors of MAL extensionists, will be initiated in FISRI III, but fully implemented through CASU.	Identify pending activities within FISRI III that directly/indirectly contribute to the achievement of the recommendation and strengthen the activities.	September - December 2012.	FAO Zambia, RAF
Recommendation 3: An "End-Line-Survey" should be conducted by the end of FISRI III, based on the Baselines undertaken in FISRI I and II, to determine the impact and benefit of FISRI through survey techniques, to compensate for the absence of meaningful M&E evidence base data for FISRI (i.e. absence of consistent progress reports, as well as systematic verification and spot-checks over the project cycle).	NO	Accepted			End - Line Survey is foreseen upon finalization of FISRI III.	Preparation of the ToRs, identification and recruitment of the survey consultant.	December 2012 - January 2013	FAO Zambia. RAF/AGP. Local Recruitment: FAO Zambia. International Recruitment: TCEO
Future Programming (CASU) and Promotion of CA: CA "Best-Practice" Approaches and Innovation								
Recommendation 4: CA needs to be better "institutionalized" in terms of its integration into policy, research and educational institutions, and needs to be better promoted and incorporated into existing farmer practices through more effective best-practices demonstration approaches. The CA Task Force within MAL should actively link with other programmes through the CAA platform. Such a platform brings together all the challenges and valuable lessons learned by practitioners and	YES	Accepted			i) Extend and harmonize "extension based" promotion of CA within the scope of CASU implementation and onwards. ii) Continue efforts to promote good farming practices, delinking CA from provision of inputs and expanding the current package of services (in line with FAO's programme priorities) to include support for mechanized CA and training on good farming practices. iii) Work to produce training manuals that are specific to	Within CASU implementation framework, the National Conservation Agriculture Task Force and the Conservation Agriculture	2013-2015	FAO Zambia, RAF, AGP

the industry regarding CA application. There is also a need to include CA in MAL training programmes, and inclusion of CA into the curricula of tertiary institutions to ensure potential extension workers are introduced to CA technologies.					the Zambian context and experience and comprehensively articulate the inter-relationship of CA with general GAPS.	Association (CAA) will be merged into the CA Insaka, which will run the platforms. The expected function of this platform will be to provide CA policy formulation guidelines to MAL, setting CA standards, and coordinating CA activities in the country.		
Recommendation 5: CA best-practices need to be more effectively documented for evidence of CA impact in terms of climate-smart approaches, increased yields and reduced input and labor costs. CA research & development needs to be strengthened by closely working with research institutions (e.g. GART and ZARI) to adapt CA to the Zambia specific situation and the different agro-ecologies. These adaptations could include the integration of livestock issues into CA activities to enhance adoption and sustainability. Issues of pasture availability for livestock during the Winter and use of alternative sources of mulch to reduce pressure on crop residues could compliment CA programmes. A CA policy document could lay the framework for promoting the best-practices and provide important guidelines and support.	YES	Accepted			Where possible, other expressed needs of communities related to sustainable land management such as: watershed management and irrigation/dams, tree planting, integration of livestock and crop (including vegetable) production, animal health, post-harvest handling/storage, pest management, integrated weed management providing for broader scope for weed control, etc. An ecologically and economically sound approach should be applied, limiting chemical fertilizers and pesticides to a minimum. FAO Zambia needs to develop and implement an effective communication strategy, with support from TCER, to ensure the documentation and sharing of best practices with internal and external audiences.	Incorporate in CASU activities.	2014-2015	FAO Zambia, RAF, AGP, TCER
Recommendation 6: There is a need for greater cross-collaboration and co-ordination between the various CA initiatives underway, in particular between FISRI (and CASU) and CFU, to promote greater peer-review and information-sharing.	YES	Accepted			Partnerships with CA stakeholders and communities will be articulated with a longer-term vision. Even when funding commitments are framed within short-term LoA's, a common vision and strategy can be expressed	Incorporate in CASU project.	Continuous	FAO Zambia, AGP/RAF/SF S.

Enhanced and faster development can be achieved when an objective rationalization of past initiatives is used for planning and implementation of future activities and future government CA initiatives utilize all existing relevant experience on CA for the benefit of Zambia and the Zambian farmer.					through MoUs or through longer-term sectoral strategic plans. FAO's role may more fully reflect its technical comparative advantage, bringing higher level technical assistance to its partners in addition to operational support.				
<p>Recommendation 7: CA programmes must ensure greater engagement at participating-farmer level – a bottom-up approach – with greater emphasis on CA extension approaches being targeted at this level, promoting best-practice approaches linked to performance-based incentives.</p> <p>The lead-farmers will continue to be needed, but their role needs to be redefined for best effect. Interaction with the beneficiaries at field-level is the key to enhancing learning and future improvement in project activities. Best performing lead farmers should be identified and documented for greater and more effective 'lesson learning'.</p>	YES	Accepted			i) Lead Farmers' selection process to be reviewed and re-defined together with implementing partners. ii) Lead Farmers' selection strategies and ToRs to be developed and put in place before commencement of CASU.	Review and re-define Lead Farmers' selection criteria/process.	Jan -13	FAO Zambia, RAF, AGP	
Future Programming (CASU) and Promotion of CA: Capacity-building and Training									
Recommendation 8: Capacity-building needs to become more sustainable and replicable through a Train-the-Trainer (ToT) approach linked to performance-based incentives. Embarking on a ToT programme to sustain capacity building of CA in the farming community is thus a key success factor for future initiatives.	YES	Accepted			CASU project will build on lessons learned from FISRI I, II and III, while strengthening the capacity of smallholder farmers and extension workers to improve post-production management. (The capacity of the extension workers at camp level is key to address the capacity development needs of farming communities.)	Incorporate in CASU activities	2013-2015	FAO Zambia, RAF, AGP	
Recommendation 9: A comprehensive Field Training Manual needs to be developed and adopted to ensure more consistent and relevant training and capacity-building is achieved, which should include among other topics, the following: (i) CA concept, principles, and benefits; (ii) A variety of basic CA options (manual, animal and tractor-powered); (iii) Possible extension approaches, including the funding and other requirements; (iv) Simple	YES	Accepted			Groundwork for the production of the training manual to be laid out before the NTE date of FISRI III.	LTU to initiate the process of the training manual production	Nov-12	RAF/AGP, FAO Zambia, TCEO	

examples of gross margin calculations for CA and non-CA; (v) General herbicide issues. Such a Manual will ensure more effective training and capacity-building								
Future Programming (CASU) and Promotion of CA: E-Voucher Scheme and Mechanization								
Recommendation 10: E-Voucher Schemes need to become more evolutionary in nature through linkage with the inflation index, greater recognition of the farmer development stage and increased focus and emphasis on performance-based approaches to use of incentives in order to minimize the risk of creating a 'dependency syndrome'.	YES		Partially Accepted		FAO will continue to support e-voucher implementation, testing, studying and documenting of different approaches used by different partners to enhance linkages with the market and reduce dependency on external agencies for inputs (contract farming, vouchers, work-for-inputs, vouchers for mechanized CA services [i.e. sub-soiling, planting, weed management, transport, post-harvest/processing], credit-in-kind, subsidized inputs, capacity building of farmers' organizations, etc.). This should result in the development of consensus on good practices which can help to refine FAO's own strategy and that of its partners.	Seek funding to pilot alternative market linkage approaches.	2013	FAO Zambia, RAF/AGP
Recommendation 11: Future Programming (CASU) and Promotion of CA: E-Voucher Scheme and Mechanization Mechanization needs to be scaled-up in developing 'commercial' CA, but care is needed in ensuring economically viable approaches/business models are adopted, while availability of equipment, access to finance/leasing and development of alternative ownership models need further exploration and focus. So long as the barrier to entry is the cost of the tractors, operators will enter the business until profits become zero. To avoid overconcentration in the hands of a few, the financing institutions should vary the repayment period from 3 years when the demand is high to 6 years when the demand is in equilibrium with supply. Keeping the number of operators high in this manner will open access to more farmers and retain support for the viability of the operator.	YES	Accepted			CASU project team and Zambia should further develop the national CA/mechanization strategy, which should further clarify the roles of private and public sector stakeholders in CA/mechanization. This CA/mechanization strategy should set the stage for an enabling environment that will facilitate CA and private sector-led mechanization services. With a CA/AMS in place, the private sector will participate more in CA mechanization services by offering financial credit to farmers for purchase of CA machinery, inputs and services. It is also assumed that banks will find the CA agribusiness model attractive and that, once farmers acquire the equipment, they will not divert it to conventional ploughing or solely haulage. To counter this possibility, the CASU project will conduct (in parallel to the CA/AMS) a business study on the appropriate mechanization business model and provide		2012	FAO Zambia/RAF/AGP/ AGS

					technical assistance in terms of capacity building in business skills and CA skills.			
Future Programming (CASU) and Promotion of CA: Gender Mainstreaming and Social Aspects								
<p>Recommendation 12: Gender Mainstreaming and 'latent' social issues need to be addressed in any CA adoption programmes, as issues around mechanization, cash-crops and access to markets have residual effects which affect women's involvement and empowerment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Future, programming should take into account differential access and control of resources between women and men, gender roles, as well as strategic and practical gender needs; - Develop clear gender equity outcomes and indicators and establish clear gender mainstreaming responsibilities and accountabilities within project staff and the extension delivery systems. Appoint a project Gender Focal Person (GFP), from within current project staff, with clear terms of reference. - Gender equality and women empowerment, HIV/AIDS and leadership should be in-built in CA extension service delivery and capacity-building; - M&E systems should collect sex disaggregated data, gender and social issues information which should be analyzed and utilized for improved gender-sensitive programming; - There is need for development of a gender strategy and guidelines that can provide guidance on how to mainstream gender in CA activities; - Consider integration of diverse food products with value-addition and market linkages to provide increased incomes for women. 	YES	Accepted			<p>CASU project will provide beneficiary selection guidelines that will ensure that women and other marginalized groups receive an equal opportunity to benefit from the project. Special effort should be made to review the gender disaggregated labour requirements in CA systems, especially in handhoe/chaka hoe-based systems. The gender disaggregated labour demand in CA systems may increase the demand for mechanized CA systems (animal traction based or small tractor based) in order to reduce the existing labour peaks that occur mostly for chaka hoe/basin-based CA; manual weeding and harvesting.</p>		2013-2015	CASU project management.

Future Programming (CASU) and Promotion of CA: Market-orientation and 'Commercialization' Supports

<p>Recommendation 13: In order to achieve economies of scale and to avoid an over-emphasis on production-oriented CA approaches, there is a need to incorporate 'commercial' best-practice to CA development in CASU.</p> <p>This can be achieved through strengthening of the supply-chain, enhanced value-chain development (through greater emphasis on value-adding/processing activities), an increased focus on market access (local, regional, national and international) and market support measures, including market information, with greater emphasis on farmer organization, marketing and access to seasonal working capital/trade finance;</p>	YES	Accepted			<p>One of the expected results of the CASU project is to ensure CA farmer input and output supply chains are improved. FAO and MAL will also promote linkages between traders and processors and the agrodealers to open channels for trading chains between producers and end users in commodities, in addition to maize. FAO and MAL will also remain alert to opportunities to introduce village-level processing technology to enhance income-earning opportunities. The project will initiate trials in the scope for commodity traders, including FRA, to become virtual agents of input supply by issuing e-vouchers for the purchase of inputs at discount rates. The e-vouchers, used in this way, will in effect perform the role of savings accounts, specifically targeted at inputs, which will bridge the time gap between the sale of crops, when farmers have more funds, and when they need to acquire inputs for the next crop, by which time they are usually short of funds. The discount will be equivalent to interest earned in a savings account, and will be affordable to the agrodealer by virtue of the certainty that it will provide for the sale of specified inputs.</p>	2013-2015	FAO Zambia, RAF/AGP/AGS
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Future Programming (CASU) and Promotion of CA: Governance, Project Management, Reporting and M&E

<p>Recommendation 14: Project M&E needs to be comprehensively addressed and strengthened in CASU, with greater emphasis on integrated (not parallel) systems being developed in MAL, with active on-going support from FAO technical backstopping, including active deployment of FAO project staff in MAL to enhance more effective integration and synergy;</p>	YES	Accepted			<p>The M&E system as applied to the project management unit within FAO and MAL will be upgraded to enable a comprehensive account of actual performance of the project in relation to planned performance. This will provide opportunities to refine operations in pursuit of improved performance of the project management and applied technology. The M&E system will be refined to ensure that project activities remain appropriate and, therefore, supportive of the reputation of the technology and those involved in its promotion. It will alert project management to</p>	2012-continuous.	FAO Zambia, RAF, SFS.
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					incidences of non-performance and wasteful application of resources.			
Recommendation 15: A project of the size of FISRI (and CASU in the future) should have had a dedicated management function and FISRI should have been much more closely integrated with FAO Representation activities. The future CASU project should have a full-time project manager (or CTA), and should also have a clearer definition of FAO's technical backstopping arrangements.	YES	Accepted			FAO Zambia will work with the MAL project management unit on project governance modalities and agree on roles and responsibilities. FAO Technical Divisions form a CASU project taskforce that provides technical backstopping and support and collaborates closely with the envisaged CASU CTA. (Refer to comment on Recommendation 1 regarding the need to also address the staffing positions of the Representation for integrated management support of the project)		December 2012 – January 2013.	FAO Zambia; AGP; AGS; FAORAF, SFS and future CASU technical Project Taskforce.