

Evaluation of FAO Cooperation in Honduras (2002-2007)

Executive Summary

1. The evaluation of FAO's activities in Honduras was undertaken in response to the FAO Programme Committee's request for "an evaluation drawing conclusions on the basis of evaluations of the totality of FAO's work in individual countries". Country evaluations were previously carried out in Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Cambodia. A synthesis report of these evaluations will be submitted to the Programme Committee at its May 2008 session.

2. As with other country evaluations, the evaluation of FAO's activities in Honduras is to inform stakeholders on the quality of FAO's work in the country, analyze the factors that affect the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of FAO and improve its overall performance. All country evaluations covered the preceding five-year period; in the case of Honduras, period covered was 2002-2007.

3. The evaluation of FAO's activities in Honduras began in June 2007 and ended in February 2008 with the posting of the final report on the FAO Evaluation Service's website. The evaluation took place in three phases: in the inception phase, the key evaluation questions and the subject matter of the impact evaluation were identified; in the second phase, the impact evaluation was carried out by a team of national and international professionals, detailed information was collected and the final evaluation mission was organized; and during the final phase, eight national and international professionals carried out the evaluation mission in October and November 2007.

4. Since 2002, FAO's strategy in Honduras has been to integrate all interventions within the framework of a Food Security Programme. Projects and programmes address various aspects of Food and Nutrition Security, complemented by activities on advocacy, information and stakeholders' coordination. FAO cooperation activities contribute to various national and UN strategies, namely the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the State Policy for the Agro-food sector and its related Operational Strategic Plan (PESA/PEO), the long term Food and Nutritional Security Policy (P-SAN), the National Forestry Programme (PRONAFOR) and the Gender Equity Policy for the Honduran Agricultural Sector.

5. During the period covered by the evaluation, the Organization was involved in programme implementation at various levels, with resources were provided by the Honduran Government, foreign donors and FAO itself. Specifically, there were nine areas of intervention:

- Support to food security, advocacy activities and formulation of strategies: National Alliance Against Hunger, participation in the Coalition for Food Security and Nutrition, regional projects (SPFS-Central America, EC-FAO Food Security programme in Central America (PRESANCA), one Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) on food security);
- Support to food security, field projects, with various inter-related projects: Programme in Lempira Sur (PROLESUR), Special Programme for Food Security/Lempira Extension System (SPFS/LES), Seeds Production, Lethal Yellowing (LY) of the Coconut Palm;
- Support to Credit and Saving Schemes in rural areas, field projects: SPFS/LES and the Programme of Access to Land;
- Local and entrepreneurial development, field projects: Programme of Access to Land and Seeds Production;
- Natural Resources Management, field projects: PROLESUR, SPFS, Seeds Production related to biodiversity and local plant genetic resources, FAO-Netherlands Partnership programme (FNPP);
- Forestry sector, various inter-related projects and products at policy, normative and field levels: National TCPs, FNPP, regional TCPs, normative products;
- Fisheries sector, capacity building initiatives and field projects: regional projects, both TCPs and donor-funded activities, consultants' support, normative products;

- Food Quality and Food-Safety sector, various sub-sectors, capacity-building activities: regional projects and normative products;
- Environment sector: support by the FAO Representation's technical team to various issues related to the links between environmental issues, natural resources management and agro-silvo-pastoral production;
- Gender issues: advocacy activities through the alliance with the National Women's Institute and the National Alliance Against Hunger and field projects through PROLESUR, SPFS/LES and Programme of Access to Land.

6. National activities carried out during the evaluation period have been relevant and timely in all areas of intervention. Projects have generally been implemented efficiently and results are on the whole positive. All regional activities have been relevant, although in some areas, such as fisheries and food safety, implementation efficiency and effectiveness were poor, with limited results. FAO's work has been traditionally concentrated in the southern and western regions of the country, in the dry tropical mountain area, but since 2005, activities have expanded to include marginal areas and groups in the north and center.

7. With respect to some of FAO's intervention instruments in Honduras, TCPs have been relevant and effective and have achieved important results, although they were few in number. They have set the ground for longer-term development processes, and beneficiaries consider the technical assistance FAO has provided in Honduras through TCP has been excellent.

8. The thrust and modality of use of the TCP-Facility funds has been appropriate. They have proved very useful and funds were seemingly used for carrying out activities in line with FAO's priorities in Honduras, contributing to strengthening FAO's function as provider of knowledge and technical assistance at the national level.

9. In addition, some of FAO's normative products are known and used in Honduras. Unfortunately, it is not possible to quantify this use or the outcomes from it, except for a few such as Codex Alimentarius.

10. It is possible to speak of an "FAO Programme" in Honduras: it is coherent, relevant and potentially effective for achieving the general objective of providing support to the country for achieving food security and reducing poverty. Activities are not scattered and projects are inter-related; they define their methodology and base their actions on lessons learned from previous projects. The stability of the high-quality technical personnel and their commitment throughout the food security and rural development programmes contribute to this result. Synergies between on-going activities are also well developed.

11. FAO's technical and operational contribution in the country is highly recognized by Honduran society, international development cooperation organizations, non-governmental development organizations and Government technical units. The Organization's technical work has generated knowledge, experience, management models, good practices and methodologies which are replicable and adaptable in the country, and provide lessons for the implementation of long-term rural development strategies.

12. Certain key elements of FAO's programme in Honduras have contributed to the success of the different initiatives:

- A long-term, sustainable and systemic vision of agro-rural development and the contribution to the relevant technical dialogue at national level;
- An approach to emergency situations based on both systemic analysis and people's participation, for the identification, formulation and implementation of long-term interventions, with wide ranging effects;
- The interest of some donors in long-term investment: FAO's experience in Lempira Sur, confirmed by that of CARE in other areas of the country, indicate the importance of extending interventions over a long period of time (at least 10 years), in order to achieve sustainable outputs and impacts that affect population's livelihoods, the environment and local institutions;

- An extensive network of strategic and operational alliances with other actors, which are complementary with FAO's initiatives, multiply and widen the Organization's actions and coverage, and promote its field activities more efficiently;
- A technical team responsible for the field programme, with solid experience, good professional performance, high commitment, internal coordination and flexibility.

13. The positive results can be partially attributed to the strategy of concentrating efforts on the field programme implemented since mid-2005. However, this decision inevitably caused a gap between the new government entities, which came to office in January 2006 after the 2005 presidential elections, and the Organization. FAO's partial "resignation" at the beginning of the term from its institutional role as Government partner in strategic decisions affected the visibility of FAO's achievements in the country. This limited both the appreciation of those achievements through the ownership at senior government levels and the possibility of influencing national policies and strategies.

14. Lack of participation in national dialogue on sub-regional development policies for agriculture and sector trade is part of this weakness. This notwithstanding, FAO was still able to play a key and highly effective role in the forestry sector.

15. Other weaknesses identified concern FAO's internal rules and the resources available to the Representation:

- FAO's image in the national Government and donor organisms as an effective and trustworthy partner is negatively affected by the lack of adequate financial tools to manage field projects;
- the portfolio of pipeline projects is significant, but, at the time of writing, it seemed very tentative and delayed in the monitoring of issues such as the Lethal Yellowing of the coconut palm; the time dedicated by the Programme Group to this function is insufficient;
- the programme of work of the Representation does not include themes such as fisheries and food quality and safety, despite their importance for the country.

Recommendations

16. The Evaluation Mission developed 19 recommendations to improve FAO's strategic effect, efficiency, effectiveness and impact. They are addressed to all levels of the Organization: national, regional and global. Some of them are also addressed to the Government of Honduras and its partners. The key elements of the recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- **Recommendation 1 – FAO's strategy in Honduras:** The Organization should develop a medium-term national priority framework for Honduras covering the next 5 years which will strengthen its policy and strategic visions and increase the integration between its action and current and future commitments. In this context, a strategy should be defined to increase FAO's political influence in the domains in which it intervenes in the country, in order to increase the political visibility of its work, improve coordination with the Government of Honduras, and facilitate greater institutional ownership of FAO's outputs and good practices in Honduras.
- **Recommendation 2 – FAO at the regional and sub-regional levels:** FAO should develop a strategy based on the principle of subsidiarity, including identification of resources for its implementation, for supporting sub-regional institutions such as OSPESCA, OIRSA, and CAC in the thematic areas for which there is a comparative advantage and a specific sub-regional interest. Furthermore, the mechanism for identifying, formulating and implementing regional and sub-regional projects should be reviewed, so as to improve sustainability and effectiveness.
- **Recommendation 3 – Project implementation:** FAO should establish an efficient and effective system that allows projects to operate with tools that are accessible to, and immediately useable by, the FAO Representative in his role as budget holder. Specifically, the Evaluation Mission suggests a client-oriented system, which takes risks into account and reduces them to a minimum, ensuring an adequate financial control. The details of the proposal are presented in Figure 14 of the report.

- **Recommendation 4 – Staff turnover in the Representation:** FAO should take appropriate measures to ensure the transition of the Representative and the Assistant Representative positions, allowing sufficient time to transfer the technical and managerial roles to the new generation of personnel.
- **Recommendation 5 – Enhancing the value of Representation staff:** The Government's permanent and stable staff should be incorporated in the HR structure taking into account the number of years they have been working within the Representation.
- **Recommendation 6 – Mechanism for distributing administrative and operational support (AOS):** AOS should be made available according to projects' operational life cycle, so as to plan the FAO Office's needs for support resources; the Organization should assume the financial risk deriving from the use of AOS with respect to the available budget for each project; and the Organization should introduce a simple system for ex-post monitoring of the FAO Representatives' use of AOS in the context of its annual reports.
- **Recommendation 7 – Financial visibility of the FNPP:** Headquarters divisions responsible for projects should review the FNPP's current operational methodology, so as to bring the budget structure and allocation mechanism in line with the Organization's normal practice.
- **Recommendation 8 – Documentation:** The FAO Representation in Honduras should review, improve and provide tools for standardizing its documentation function and databases set-up, ensuring retention of information and facilitating its use by future clients.
- **Recommendation 9 – SPFS:** The FAO Representation in Honduras should further develop the mechanisms for transferring and institutionalizing initiatives to local actors; improve technical assistance and activities aimed at production diversification for groups with a certain degree of food security; ensure the appropriateness of the elimination of burning, stubble management, direct sowing and agro-forestry techniques and adapt other practices for agro-ecological zones different from those of the dry tropical mountain areas, so as to allow for an adequate coverage of other areas and give the programme a national scope; prepare a diagnosis and a plan of action for urban and peri-urban areas; better integrate the nutritional aspects with the other components; and maintain the level of monitoring and technical assistance for capitalization and savings groups.
- **Recommendation 10 – Impact evaluation of SPFS capitalization processes:** The Evaluation recommends taking measures to improve support to rural Saving and Credit organizations, such as meeting the need for long-term investment, building membership's capacity for management and production, and conducting an in-depth comparative analysis of the mechanisms used by SPFS/LES and a similar comparable programme (PRONADEL) so as to identify the most effective methodology for developing capitalization.
- **Recommendation 11 – Seeds programme:** The FAO Representation in Honduras should institutionalize the process for certifying seed-producing farmers, support the re-organization of the network to reduce transaction costs, consolidate activities while improving practices for intervening in agro-ecological zones outside the dry tropics, and explore the possibility of introducing the production of seeds and vegetative material of forest species.
- **Recommendation 12 – Access to land:** In the future, the Government of Honduras and its development partners should continue to support rural enterprises by financing their access to land, in conformity with the model established by the Programme for Access to Land. They should also implement programmes based on this experience, clearly defining the profiles and support needs of the target populations. In these programmes, technical assistance related to the transfer of non-refundable resources should be extended to 4 years.
- **Recommendation 13 – Access to land:** The FAO Representation in Honduras should reflect upon the various land tenure-related aspects and their effect on the design of FAO's overall intervention in Honduras. Specifically for the Programme for Access to Land, the evaluation team recommends reviewing the monitoring and evaluation system; fully analyzing the needs and constraints faced by target groups in the investment and entrepreneurial development process, so as to establish adequate amounts for non-refundable transfers; and increasing the

use of the PACTA experience, focusing the analysis on key aspects for improving and replicating the model.

- **Recommendation 14 – Lethal Yellowing of the coconut palm:** The FAO Representation in Honduras should act quickly to raise funds in order to continue supporting the collaborative processes with the garífuna communities and the Red Wafaluna, ensuring compliance with the project's objectives of food security and local development.
- **Recommendation 15 – Education sector:** The FAO Representation in Honduras should promote a more pertinent institutional location of the TCP on Education, which best harmonizes the project's activities with those of other organizations working in the same framework.
- **Recommendation 16 – Forestry sector:** In the context of the implementation of the new law, FAO should continue providing support to the institutional building, regulatory and forestry inventory processes carried out by the Agenda Forestal Hondureña. In addition, field activities should be implemented with a more integrated agro-silvo-pastoral approach and a greater attention to emerging issues such as carbon sequestration and bio-fuels.
- **Recommendation 17 – Fisheries sector:** FAO should more pro-actively influence the Honduran government's plans, policies and strategies for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The Organization should also develop a more solid and complete support plan, including support to quality and safety of fisheries products. Finally, aquaculture and artisanal fisheries should be mainstreamed as a key component in all food security programmes.
- **Recommendation 18 – Food quality and safety:** FAO should integrate in its country programme for Honduras food quality and safety issues, focus on the domestic market approach, support to the National Codex Committee and emphasis on the work of the National Committee for Health and Plant Health Measures. To this end, the Government of Honduras and the FAO should develop alliances with the United Nations System.
- **Recommendation 19 – Gender issues:** The FAO Representation in Honduras should recruit for a medium-term perspective, a coordinator with the task of developing and implementing a gender strategy, including quantifying and identifying the necessary sources of funds. The strategy will allow integrating in all FAO's activities, the principles of the National Policy for Rural Women and related policy and strategic frameworks, as well as including the details described in the report. In addition, the Programme for Access to Land should implement its gender strategy; the SPFS in the framework of its work with rural credit and saving organizations should support women in the negotiation of their preferences for the use of funds, especially for not exclusively productive activities which are within their social and reproductive roles.