



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

### Ninety-fifth Session

Rome, 8 – 12 May 2006

### CONTENT OF EVALUATION REPORTS SUBMITTED TO THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

#### *Background*

1. At its 94th Session in September 2005 the Programme Committee “took note of the query put to it by the Evaluation Service on the form in which it wished to receive evaluation reports to facilitate their effective consideration while containing reproduction costs. It requested a short paper on this issue at its next session and clarified that pending its consideration by the Committee, evaluation reports should continue to be presented to the Programme Committee in full<sup>1</sup>”.
2. This note addresses these issues while also taking account of the practice of other UN organizations, agencies and programmes.

#### **A. LENGTH OF EVALUATION REPORTS AND FACTORS IN THEIR EFFECTIVE CONSIDERATION**

3. Evaluation reporting for the Programme Committee has become the means by which major evaluations are placed in the public domain and made available to the entire FAO membership. These reports frequently address controversial issues and draw conclusions on the value of FAO programmes and strategies. They must, therefore, also clearly present the evidence and arguments for their findings and recommendations. Furthermore, the governing bodies have requested that evaluations must go more deeply into outcomes and impacts and present the evidence for their conclusions on these.
4. Exceptionally long reports are both difficult to read and digest. Although all reports include executive summaries, some members of the Programme Committee have commented in

<sup>1</sup> CL 129/3 para. 62

the past that evaluation reports are too long to be given effective consideration, while others have valued their level of detail and argumentation. Evaluations, whether led externally or by the Evaluation Service staff, are also independent. There are thus limits on the extent to which the head of evaluation can insist on changes to restrict length (annexes have already been largely eliminated from evaluation reports).

5. In preparing this report, enquiries were made with other UN organizations, offices and programmes on their practices<sup>2</sup>. Few other UN organizations and programmes have the institutionalised reporting relationship with the governing bodies or produce the number of major in-depth evaluation reports which FAO does. IFAD, UNDP<sup>3</sup> and UNICEF were the only organizations found to normally present full evaluation reports to organs of their governing bodies. They present the full report in the original language only, usually English. The UN Office of Oversight Services limits the length of reports to 8,500 words (12-14 pages). Other organizations which present some of their reports to the governing bodies such as ILO and UNESCO, do so in summary form in three languages (English, French and Spanish).

6. Not all FAO evaluation reports are of uniform importance, either for the Programme Committee or the FAO membership. Those addressing high profile priority programmes such as the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS), the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) or Codex Alimentarius are likely to engender more interest and depth of discussion, than those dealing with many technical programmes. Nevertheless, if an evaluation drew major conclusions for change on a technical programme, it probably would also become controversial.

## B. COST CONSIDERATIONS

7. **Table 1** summarises costs of evaluation reports for the Programme Committee. The cost of producing evaluation reports increased slightly between the 2002-03 and 2004-05 biennia, which was partly accounted for by cost increases in translation and partly by the completion of the transition from evaluations completed as headquarters desk studies by the Evaluation Service staff to more in-depth evaluations including field work and external expertise, with an increase in the average length of reports. **Table 2** places these in the context of all papers relating to evaluation placed before the Committee. Evaluation reports account for 76 percent of the total costs of evaluation-related papers and management responses for 11 percent, while the remainder are papers addressing the evaluation work programme, institutional matters and auto-evaluation.

---

<sup>2</sup> Information at varying levels of detail was obtained on the UN Secretariat; the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); International Labour Organization (ILO); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); World Food Programme (WFP); and World Health Organization (WHO)

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

**Table 1: Costs of translating and printing evaluation reports for the Programme Committee**

Evaluation Reports on:		Costs of Translation (US\$)	Cost of Printing (US\$)
2002-03:	1. SPFS 2. Animal Health 3. EMPRES <sup>4</sup> -Desert Locusts 4. Strategy A3 Preparedness and Response to Emergencies 5. Crop Production 6. Codex and Food Standards 7. FAOSTAT <sup>5</sup>	190,882	2,537
2004-05:	1. Decentralization 2. Fisheries Exploitation and Utilization 3. Communicating FAO's Messages 4. Livestock Production, Policy and Information 5. TCP 6. Afghanistan and Southern Africa	216,567	2,701
<b>Total</b>		<b>407,449</b>	<b>5,238</b>

8. It can be seen that cost considerations and the length of reports are related almost entirely to the question of translation. Translation accounts for 98.7 percent of total costs and the costs of reproduction in English is less than one percent of the total.

**Table 2: Costs of reproduction for all evaluation-related documentation in the Programme Committee in the biennia 2002-03 and 2004-05**

	Costs of Translation and Printing (US\$)	Percentage of Total
Evaluation Reports	412,687	76%
Management Responses and Follow up reports	57,852	11%
Evaluation Work-Programme and Institutional Matters	49,558	9%
Auto-evaluation reporting	23,788	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>543,885</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>4</sup> Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases

<sup>5</sup> Corporate Database for Substantive Statistical Data

### **C. SUGGESTED DECISION BY THE COMMITTEE**

9. The issuance of reports for the Programme Committee is the mechanism by which they are placed in the public domain. The question is, therefore, not only whether Programme Committee members need the reports in all FAO languages, but whether the membership at large have this requirement. It is necessary to preserve the principle of full evaluation reports transparently available to all, as well as facilitating their most cost-effective consideration. However, in order to facilitate the Committee's work and contain costs, it could be useful to:

- ensure that executive summaries are kept extremely concise (2-3 pages maximum); and
- include in full reports a new section providing a more extended summary of the main findings and recommendations.

10. The Evaluation Service could then have the discretion on its judgement alone and also on the specific request of the Programme Committee to decide whether for each evaluation:

- only the executive summary and extended summary of the main findings and recommendations are translated for the Committee with the full report in English available on the Internet; or
- the report is translated in full into the official languages of the Organization, in view of the wide interest in that particular evaluation.