



Members' Update

# FAO renewal

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## Work on decentralization moves forward

A number of key reforms are under way as part of the decentralization of FAO's worldwide operations. The Programme of Work and Budget 2010-11 and the Immediate Plan of Action endorsed a series of planned measures that will have a major impact on the Organization's work, reducing fragmentation and ensuring different elements function as one. These include:

- involvement of decentralized offices in formulating the strategic objectives, medium-term plan and biennial programme of work, senior-level decision and policy making, and the introduction of results-based management and "360 degree" staff performance evaluations;
- delegation of operational authority on the management of projects under the technical cooperation programme and greater authority for administrative, procurement and financial issues;
- improved information and financial management systems for the field – compliant with International Public Sector Accounting Standards – as well as better IT infrastructure and connectivity, bringing the bandwidth of all country offices to a minimum level and upgrading video conference facilities;
- revised job descriptions for regional representatives, subregional coordinators and heads of multidisciplinary teams.

The revision of the national medium-term priority framework guidelines is aimed at improving planning, and thereby further enhancing the performance of the country offices. Meanwhile participation in the UN Development Assistance Framework process should lead to greater coordination with other UN agencies.

Yves Klompenhouwer, programme officer in the office of support to decentralization, said staff training was a vital component of the process. “FAO Representatives and technical officers have been taking part in a series of planning and training events to help prepare for the changes and make them as effective as possible,” he explained.

Klompenhouwer said the latest round of FAO regional conferences that began in April also forms part of the renewal process. Each regional conference will discuss priority actions for its region, the reform of the Committee on World Food Security, and issues relating to a Global Shared Services Centre. “They will also discuss a medium- to long-term vision on the structure and functioning of decentralized offices, with a common aim throughout being to providing an efficient and high-quality service to Members,” added Klompenhouwer.

Other related changes include the new staff rotation policy, benchmarking and performance-based reporting for field offices, and preparation of a training plan for country office staff.

## **Headquarters restructuring takes shape**

A comprehensive programme of headquarters restructuring is moving forward. The new organizational structure was endorsed by the 2009 Conference as a means of improving performance and saving on costs. Among the main changes are the establishment of two Deputy Directors-General – one for knowledge and the other for operations – and numerous changes resulting from the elimination of one-third of the headquarters director-level positions.

The knowledge and communication department has been abolished and its functions redistributed within the new structure. Some departments and divisions have been renamed to reflect their revised structure and responsibilities, and there have been changes in the independent offices reporting to the Director-General.

“The impact of the new structure affects staff at all levels as new workflows and working relationships are taking shape” said Manoj Juneja, assistant director-general of corporate services, human resources and finance. “This poses a number of challenges, while the benefits of these changes are multifold. Among them is the fact that a better-structured organization will assist us in contributing to agreed strategic objectives through well-defined, timebound and measurable results. The consolidation of units at all levels will also help to reduce fragmentation, helping avert FAO’s tendency to work in silos.

“The new structure has necessitated hundreds of office moves and many processes have been set up, such as assigning of approvals to budget holders and setting up of approval groups for purchasing,” said Juneja. He added that the process fully tied in with increased decentralization, with the changes meaning increased involvement of decentralized offices in senior management decision-making.

The full restructuring of the secretariat at headquarters level is due to be completed by 2012.

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Comments? Suggestions? Write to [Members-Update@fao.org](mailto:Members-Update@fao.org).