



Members' Update

FAO renewal



Governing bodies reform on schedule

Reform of FAO's governing bodies is on track with half the required actions now completed. The Independent External Evaluation recommended changes in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the governing bodies in directing and overseeing FAO's work.

"The overall aim is to enhance the governance of the Organization," said governing body reform project leader Ali Mekouar. "There are 80 actions involved and half of these have already been put into effect, with many having required changes in the general rules of FAO which were approved by the Conference last November. The remaining actions will take place mainly over the 2010-11 biennium."

Changes include a clearer distinction between the roles of the FAO Conference and Council. FAO Conference will continue to make the final decision on the objectives, strategy and budget of the Organization, following recommendations from the Council. FAO Council will play a more dynamic role in the development of the programme and budget, drawing on increased advice and involvement from the programme and finance committees. It will also extend oversight and monitoring, particularly for extrabudgetary resources and human resources.

The facilitation role of the Independent Chairperson of the Council will be expanded, to include consulting with regional groups ahead of Council sessions.

Increased input will also be coming from the regions. The FAO Regional Conferences have now become part of the FAO governance and will provide their views to the Council and Conference on regional priorities and also on issues such as intraregional trade and investment.

Mekouar said the role of Members in this project made it distinctive from other projects under the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal. "It is different in that it has been mainly driven by Member Nations, while the role of the Secretariat has been primarily to support and facilitate the work," he explained. "Among the actions to be completed by members is an agreement on the overall size of the FAO Council."

Among other changes, the technical committees will assume a stronger role, reporting directly to the FAO Conference on global issues and to the Council on programme priorities and performance.

Technical cooperation programme decentralized

Decentralization of the technical cooperation programme aims to further improve FAO's work with Member Countries.

Regional representatives are now responsible for managing most of the technical cooperation programme budget approved in the Programme of Work and Budget for 2010-11.

The responsibility for the full cycle of development projects – formulation, approval and closure – is being transferred to FAO Representatives for national projects, to the subregional coordinators for subregional projects and to the regional representatives for regional projects.

Emergency and inter-regional projects will still be managed from headquarters.

Senior project analyst Nina Brandstrup, in the technical cooperation programme unit, said: "The changes will help increase the autonomy of the regions and the predictability of funds available. We expect that they will improve ownership of the approved projects and therefore their implementation and sustainability".

"We are also hoping that the changes will make the approval process faster so that assistance gets to the member countries in a more timely fashion."

The assistant director-general of the technical cooperation department will continue to have overall responsibility for management of the programme on behalf of the Director-General.

Brandstrup said that Member Countries had played a pivotal role in helping draw up the changes, in collaboration with senior management.

She explained that a small unit comprising four staff will remain at headquarters, where its role will include monitoring and ensuring regular reporting to the member countries through the governing bodies. The unit will also be responsible for processing requests for emergency and interregional projects.

The decentralization went "live" at the start of 2010, and a transition period will see headquarters providing additional support and further training to the decentralized offices to get them up to speed.

Comments? Suggestions? Write to Members-Update@fao.org.