



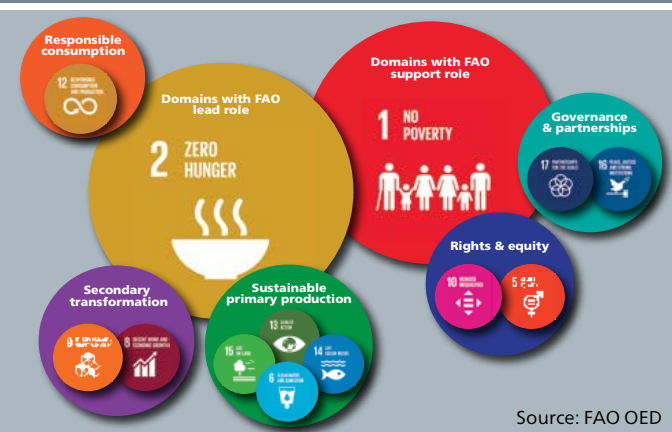
Evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework

Designed in 2013, the Strategic Framework aimed to position the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) more strategically and to address the facts that the Organization's programmatic activities were defined along silo-like disciplinary lines and that corporate efforts were not clearly aligned with the country programme priorities agreed with Members.

This evaluation reaffirms that the conceptual rationale for the Strategic Framework was well suited to these goals, capitalizing on FAO's technical excellence to drive its engagement at country level and to achieve the interconnected SDGs. FAO has managed a substantial transformation of its 70-year-old culture and organizational architecture, to prepare it for an emerging dynamic landscape. The evaluation underlines these significant achievements.

The changing nature of development assistance and technical support have also evolved and call for a rethinking of FAO's offering as a knowledge and technical organization. With new leadership at the top, FAO has an opportunity to fast-track its transformation by resolutely addressing the outstanding issues identified in this report and preparing the ground for FAO to embrace a new organizational culture that is strategically oriented and focused on expertise-based engagement and agile implementation.

Relative weight of interconnected SDGs for FAO



Readiness for the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform

Since 2013, the global development architecture and environment have changed, particularly with the introduction of the 2030 Agenda. The cultural shift promoted by the Strategic Framework was useful in preparing FAO to adopt an approach that similarly articulated a development strategy based on interconnected and cross-sectoral objectives.

The Strategic Development Goals (SDGs) and UN Reform call for adjustments to FAO's structure and processes to ensure the Organization's effective engagement. FAO is conscious of the need to redefine its strategy to better support Country Offices in light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), but there is currently no evidence of a concerted Organization-wide approach or guidance involving programme teams, technical divisions and decentralized offices.

FAO needs to be able to respond to these requirements with a strategy and action plan for supporting countries on the SDGs, while simultaneously reorganizing its support capacity to engage in the UNSDCF. FAO should urgently develop a common understanding of its role in helping countries to implement their SDG plans, its direct contributions to the various SDGs and how it will seek to deliver and measure these through 2030. There should be integration (beyond alignment) of the SDGs into FAO's Strategic Framework.

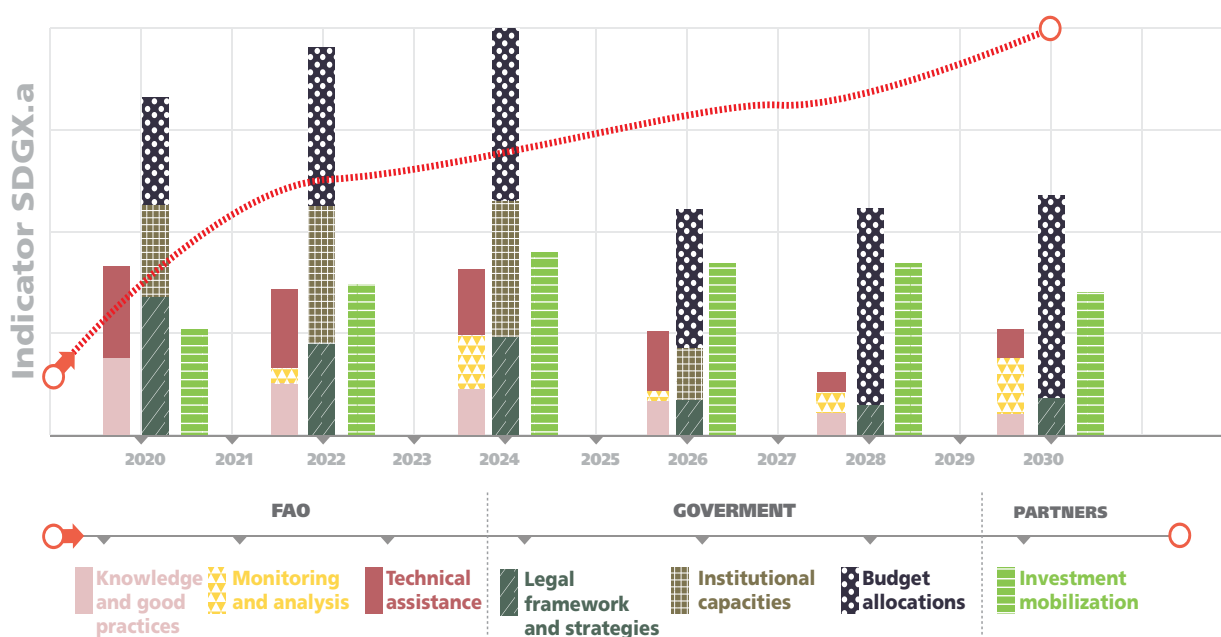
Appropriateness of the Results Framework

The SDGs also brought a common language to all development stakeholders. The utility of a programmatic structure based on FAO-specific SOs was somewhat reduced by the need for FAO to adopt these common programmatic references to facilitate communication with external interlocutors. UN Reform, emphasizing the need to work collaboratively, has increased the significance of integrating the SDGs as the backbone of the Strategic Framework and, in this respect, recent efforts to align the Results Framework to the SDG targets are a step in the right direction.

FAO organized its Results Framework around five SOs. This has allowed FAO to aggregate the results it needs at corporate level to report on its achievements, as required by its Governing Bodies. Similar to the corporate results framework of any large developmental organization, the need for aggregated reporting across countries and regions involves trade-offs against the specifics of country-level results.

What's more, as formulated, the causal linkages between the concrete results-level outputs that FAO has delivered and the high-and intangible outcomes stated in the Results Framework were not well articulated in a clear pathway or theory of change for each objective. While the outcomes are recognized as joint responsibilities of FAO and its partners, the leading contributions, level and sequence of efforts and mutual accountabilities of FAO, governments and donors are not clearly delineated. Thus, the Results Framework is not the best basis for reporting on individual contributions to any policy, normative or institutional change, or to higher-level objectives, including the SDGs.

Line of sight for achieving the SDGS



Source: FAO OED

To address these challenges, the evaluation recommends updating the theory of change underpinning the Results Framework to identify more tangible, issue-based programmatic objectives and to articulate the result chains of its normative work on global public goods and development objectives. Spelling out how FAO's actions complement those of other stakeholders in contributing to high-level impacts will also enhance the utility of the Results Framework for management, resource-mobilization and reporting purposes. Indicators to measure progress in the Results Framework should be results-focused and delineate the respective contributions of FAO, its partners and counterparts to development outcomes aligned with the SDGs.

A representation of possible programme portfolio groupings aligned to SDGs, as proposed by the "20 interconnected actions"



Effectiveness of management arrangements

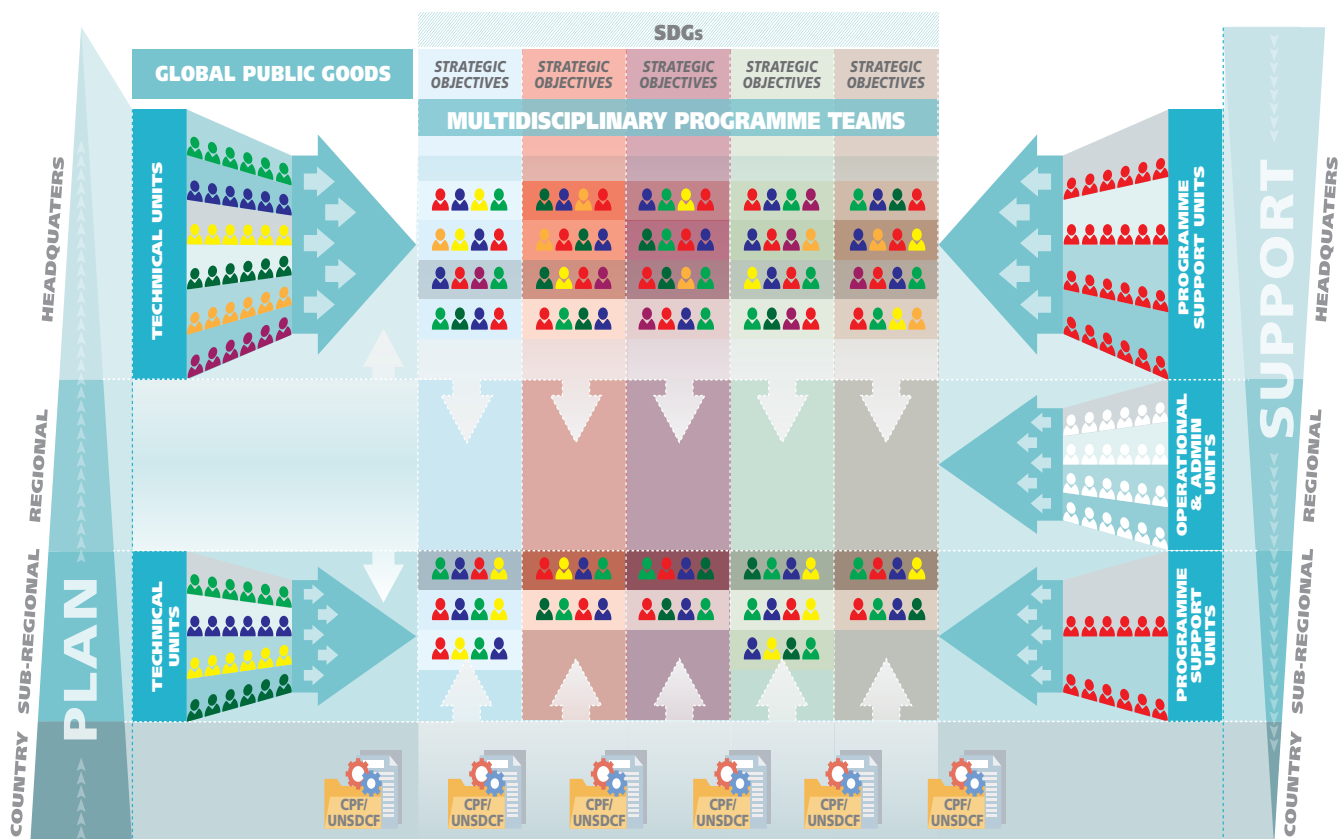
The management model that was developed to make FAO more strategic and country-oriented was generally appropriate, but owing to implementation shortcomings, did not fully achieve its goals. The matrix-type structure was suited to fostering cross-sectoral thinking and led to more interdisciplinary work at headquarters. However, it did not have the expected positive effects on FAO country programmes, in particular, as the matrix did not percolate down to decentralized levels of delivery. Management reshuffles were primarily at the headquarters and regional levels, with the creation of Strategic Programme (SP) teams, dedicated to promoting programmatic work. The investment in SPs at Regional Office level was too limited to enable them to focus on their intended programmatic leadership and guidance role and delivery support. With this limitation, and as Sub-Regional and Country Offices did not have a defined role in the delivery structure, the Strategic Framework only marginally changed the way that FAO operated at country level. This is a concern, as FAO's performance is primarily measured at this level, and this is where the Strategic Framework was supposed to make a difference.

Another major factor limiting the influence of the SPs and, thus, the impact of the Strategic Framework on FAO's work lay in the disjointed management of its two sources of funding. SP teams only have a say in the Regular Programme, giving them very little control over FAO's trust-funded programme, which accounts for the bulk of resources. Moreover, matching the programme structure (SPs) to the Strategic Objectives created challenges and an implicit skew towards upwards accountability, with SP teams focusing on the conformance of frontline programmes with the Results Framework, which was counter to the bottom-up logic of Country Offices determining the corporate level of effort.

As UN Reform and the 2030 Agenda underscore the need for a country-oriented model, as promoted by the 2013 Strategic Framework, the evaluation recommends putting Country Offices at the heart of FAO's programme delivery structure. To this end, given resource limitations, the evaluation suggests organizing support for Country Offices by bringing multidisciplinary teams closer to country level, using the Sub-regional Offices as initial programme support and technical hubs. Regional structures should provide backup on operational aspects, with headquarters-based teams acting as sounding boards for decentralized multidisciplinary programme teams, in addition to providing thematic technical leadership. A direct line of engagement between the decentralized and headquarters-based technical teams, also contributing to FAO's normative mission, is essential to ensure that FAO warrants the highest technical inputs to the UNSDCF and country programmes. It will further allow the integration of FAO's normative and development missions, in line with the original vision of the Strategic Framework.



Illustration of recommended FAO structure in support to a more country-oriented delivery



Source: FAO OED

Adequacy of human-resource profiles

The revised Strategic Framework calls for new skill sets to support programmatic thinking, interdisciplinary approaches and investment-mobilization. Human-resources management has, thus, had to adapt to the demands of internal reform in addition to the ever-evolving needs of countries. In the face of a flat budget, FAO has managed to preserve its overall technical capacity and to reallocate some of its positions to meet the needs of the Strategic Framework. FAO should continue to offer high-level technical expertise and continue to adapt its skillset to evolving priorities.

FAO's personnel (re)assignment strategy has not been based on a systematic analysis of the function- and location-specific profiles needed to implement its Strategic Framework. There is a need to invest in assessing FAO capacities to see which staff should be allocated, while mobility should be organized in line with programmatic and management orientation. In particular, most Sub-regional Offices do not have the required critical mass of technical expertise and lack some necessary skills (such as proposal drafting and policy support) to deliver effective country support. Being closest to Country Offices, Sub-regional Offices are best placed to concentrate technical and programmatic capacities.

To ensure fitness for purpose, FAO needs to establish mechanisms to ensure its staff profiles match needs at all levels and to continue to adjust staff capacities to changing demands. In the short term, a global re-profiling exercise would establish the function- and location-specific skills required and raise FAO's profile and effectiveness of engagement in UNSDCF processes.

Effectiveness of programmatic approaches

The objective of the Strategic Framework's programmatic orientation was to strengthen FAO's mark in establishing the centrality of food and agriculture to country development agendas. SPs were established for this purpose, yet have not turned into the strong programmatic pillars intended. Several elements go some way to explaining this, including the SPs' limited influence on FAO's large field programme and the disconnect to the field, or the top-down orientation of corporate planning systems and disconnect between the Results Framework and field priorities. It is also down to the insufficiently clear demarcation of FAO's technical and SP functions, compounded to some extent by the staffing of SP teams with technical experts, prompting SP teams to divert to other functions. The fact that donors and governments, the two main drivers of FAO's investments, do not follow a programmatic logic is a constraint that should be recognized and addressed. In fact, donor support for programmatic approaches and lightly earmarked funding has been uninspiringly low in the past few years.

FAO has continued to deliver on a project-based model involving disproportionate transaction costs and a lack of tangible impact. Despite recognition that FAO needs to become more programmatic and strategic, there is a lack of clarity on how to define, formulate and mobilize resources for programmatic approaches in practice. SP teams have had less influence and guidance on design and resource mobilization approaches for voluntary-funded work, which are almost entirely led by country offices and technical units. The creation of a business development portfolio by the Resources Mobilization team demonstrate that the Organization has already recognized the need to define concrete, issue-based areas of work that are more marketable and suitable for external engagement.

The Strategic Framework saw the progressive integration of country priorities and normative technical work in its corporate work-planning and reporting systems. Although there have been significant improvements towards bottom-up planning based on country priorities, work planning is still excessively oriented towards regular budget allocations, while significant pieces of technical/normative work and country programming supported by extra-budgetary resources remain poorly reflected in planning and reporting. With extra-budgetary resources funding most of the delivery at country level, there is a need for integrated work planning that combines both regular and extra-budgetary resources. In an ever more competitive world, thinly resourced Country Offices require greater capacity and backstopping support for resource mobilization and donor engagement.

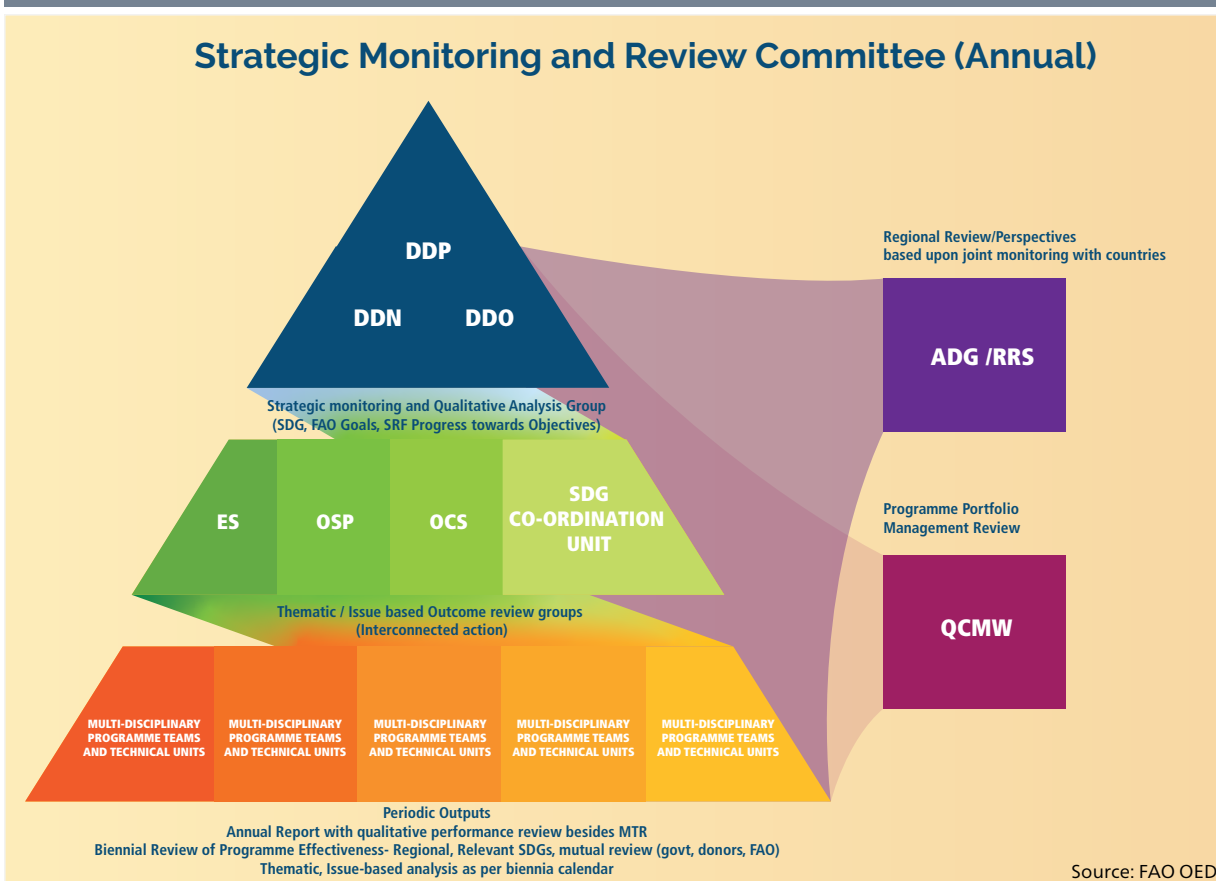
The evaluation recommends reinforcing the programme management function in FAO headquarters to promote programmatic approaches and provide strategic orientation in relation to new challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform. Some internal rearrangements are deemed necessary to consolidate core elements influencing the effectiveness of the programme function, including strategic planning, partnership management, resource mobilization and knowledge management for learning.

Effectiveness of monitoring and learning

FAO's results monitoring and reporting systems – the Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support System (PIRES), the Field Project Management Information System (FPMIS) and the Country Office Information Network (COIN) – are fragmented. Collectively, they generate enormous amount of information, but do not have analytical functionality for programme portfolio analysis or management learning. FAO has not invested sufficiently in an effective institutional monitoring function that enables qualitative assessment, strengthens learning and provides feedback to enhance programme performance and results effectiveness. There is a need for stronger structures and processes for strategic and qualitative programme monitoring and review of organizational performance and development contributions.

Consistent with the need to strengthen FAO's programmatic orientation, a structure is required to ensure that the knowledge generated by the programmes is qualitatively analysed and used for the continuous refinement of programmes. **The evaluation recommends establishing a Strategic Programme Monitoring and Review function to champion monitoring at the corporate level and allocating the requisite human resources to support this function to the decentralized offices.** FAO's corporate information management systems should be re-designed accordingly. Revisions to the Results Framework will be essential in this regard to ensure indicators promote reporting focused on results (for example, measuring the use of normative work, policy changes or investments and explaining the contribution of FAO to these results).

Illustration of the proposed structure for strategic monitoring and qualitative review





Adequacy of change management

As for the programmatic function, it is essential to equip the Organization as a whole with the appropriate capacity to reflect and adjust when undergoing profound change, such as that generated by the Strategic Framework. The introduction of the Strategic Results Framework was not a change at the margins, but a major transformation of how the Organization intended to deliver on its mission and account for results. The attention paid to managing change was not commensurate with the scale and complexity of the change involved and gave way to an approach of “learning by doing”. This also meant that FAO did not explicitly state the kind of organizational culture it wanted to support the change.

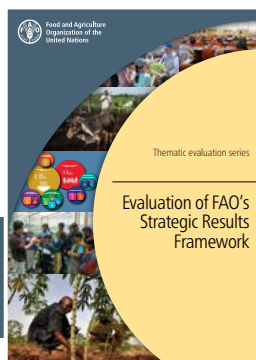
Leadership transition and the latest round of system reforms will require effective change management at FAO, so the Organization should develop and implement a strategy to institutionalize good change-management practices and, in particular, solicit FAO staff views for consideration in decisions and processes.

Effectiveness of the administrative environment

To deliver on its core values, aspirations and commitment to being a best-in-class organization and partner of choice, FAO needs to make its enabling administrative environment fit for purpose using relevant benchmarks. While administrative procedures have no direct link to the Strategic Framework itself, they are key to enabling or inhibiting adequate implementation, so were examined in the evaluation. Amid the constraints of a flat regular budget, a number of administrative procedures were introduced with a view to achieving efficiency improvements and, indeed, resulted in more than USD 150 million of corporate savings.

Nevertheless, there has been a general tendency to centralize decision making over many administrative functions, leading to significant constraints on delivery effectiveness across regions. Procedures for consultant recruitment, travel and procurement, in particular, are consistently cited by decentralized offices as having affected programme delivery and quality. The adverse effects of these procedures impact FAO’s responsiveness at the front lines, thereby engendering reputational risk for FAO among beneficiaries, partners, governments and donors.

The evaluation recommends improving the efficiency of administrative procedures to increase FAO’s agility in responding to country needs, by increasing the delegation of authority to decentralized offices, while establishing the appropriate accountability and ex-post control mechanisms as appropriate, to ensure the sound management of risks.



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