



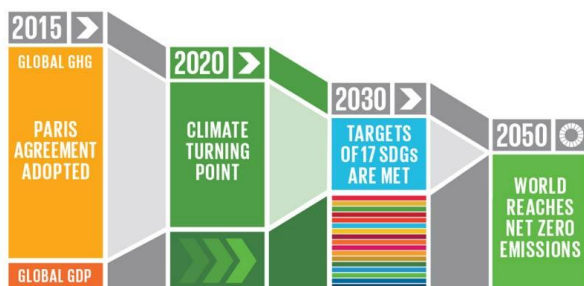
CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AT FAO

2020 Report

Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), guided by the [FAO Corporate Environmental Responsibility \(CER\) Policy](#) and the new [UN 2020-2030 Sustainability Strategy](#), and in coordination with other United Nations (UN) agencies undertaking the [Greening the Blue](#) initiative, is constantly seeking to enhance and augment the sustainability portfolios of its facilities and daily operations. The year 2020 saw a strengthening of this mandate, with sustainability considerations being incorporated more meaningfully into projects and programmes. This is attested to, for example, by the frequent collaboration between the CER team in the Infrastructure Service (CSLI) and two alternate CER focal points working in the Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity, and the Environment (OCB). Moreover, the increased involvement of, and endorsement received by, the different administrative areas representatives (travel, information technology [IT], procurement, events, facilities, and human resources [HR]) showed that **mainstreaming environmental sustainability across the organization is gaining importance and visibility**. This year has also been typified by higher awareness and cooperation from field offices, via the FAO Representatives (FAOR) Network and regional offices coordination.

A new roadmap: FAO's corporate environmental responsibility strategy 2020-2030



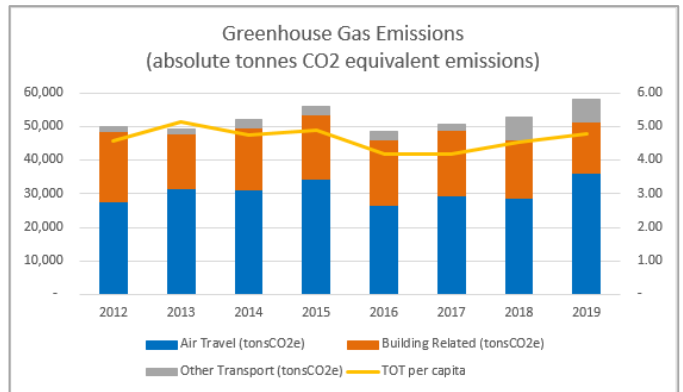
Five years after the Paris Agreement was adopted, in which governments across the world pledged to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, there is still major implementation gaps in measures to achieve this goal. At the last UN Climate Action Summit, member states were implored to set concrete and realistic steps to support the targets of the Paris Agreement. To lead by example, the UN

Strategy for Sustainability Management 2020-2030 was established to provide a framework for the integration of environmental and social considerations across UN operations.

The achievement of the Paris Agreement objectives necessitates a 45 percent reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030, compared to 2010 levels. To solidify its commitment to these goals, the FAO has articulated and outlined a series of ambitious and crucial objectives in a **new CER strategy which will cover the period 2020-2030**, aligned with the overarching UN strategy 2020-2030, and in continuation of the CER strategy 2017-2020. The new strategy, which has been submitted and awaits approval, will provide empirical objectives and modes of implementation to support the 45 percent reduction target across the Organization's operations. This will be achieved by mainstreaming environmental issues into programmes and operations, as well as outlining ways for improvements to be made in all administrative areas (i.e., procurement, travel, events, HR, facilities, IT) with a collaborative and consultative approach.

Environmental reporting: greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, waste management, and sustainable procurement

This year 111 countries (out of 121 targeted countries) submitted their environmental inventory reports (representing a **response rate of 91 percent**). The total FAO emissions recorded in 2019 are **58 266 tCO₂e**, corresponding to 4.54 tCO₂e per capita in this reporting year. Total emissions have increased compared to past years. However, this is mainly due to higher emissions from air travel and changes in calculations methodology for emissions from fleet. A summation of the relative abundance of emission types is shown in the figure.



Absolute building emissions have shown a steady decreasing trend since 2016 for both FAO as a whole (15 371 tCO₂e /year in 2019) and for DO buildings. Air travel emissions have been going up and down with a clear “biennium trend”. The year 2019 saw the highest travel emissions so far (36 173 tCO₂e), likely due to better analysis and calculations, coupled with the change in business class travel policy (since September 2019, business class tickets can be purchased for flights over 9 hours; previously it was 12 hours).



107 reporting DOs + HQ
(85% total personnel)
490 691 591 l total
57 304 l per capita



108 reporting DOs + HQ
(87% total personnel)
47.6% diversion rate
269 kg per capita



55% of the reporting DOs implements sustainable procurement

| Parameter | DO average | FAO average* |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Landfilled average | 92.3% | 53.4% |
| Recycled waste | 7.7% | 47.6% |
| Waste per capita | 75 894 litres | 57 304 litres |

* FAO average refers to the average values of DOs + FAO HQ

Despite targeted measures to decrease waste volume generation and increase diversion/recycling rates, there is still room for improvement. Future measures will have to focus on creating and promoting a transferrable and holistic environmental management system (EMS) throughout the Organization.

Achievements in FAO headquarters



There is an ongoing project to install new, safe, energy-saving windows in FAO headquarters offices. The old windows represent outdated 3mm pane glass on an iron frame, dating to the 1950's. After concerns were raised regarding their safety, it was taken as an opportunity to replace the existing windows to more modern, energy-efficient specifications. Since 2011, over 80 percent of headquarters (HQ) office windows have been installed, with approximately **1 906 windows** replaced by the end of 2020. To date, the windows are estimated to

have resulted in cumulative energy savings of 1 133 098 kWh and 122 703 smc of natural gas, over 610 tCO₂e avoided, and cumulative cost savings of USD 262 974.

To implement a more comprehensive waste management strategy in FAO headquarters, **desk bins** have been removed to encourage recycling and improve waste differentiation. Results must still be assessed.



Achievements in decentralized offices

Over the past few years, the diffusion of awareness raising material, the sharing of successful project stories, regular communication, and an evident global trend of increased sensitivity towards environmental issues, has resulted in a discernible increase in the general awareness of environmental issues throughout the Organization. This has manifested itself in various environmental measures implemented by country offices on their own initiative, being stimulated by in-house committed staff.

Environmental management system in FAO's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



At FAO's Office in Bangkok, Thailand, an environmental management system (EMS) (the first piloted by a decentralized office (DO)) was implemented in 2018. The EMS has already seen some outstanding achievements in the first two years since its inception. This includes consistent awareness raising among colleagues and the implementation of technical innovations. This has resulted in a 5 percent reduction of CO₂e emissions associated with energy usage, a **single-use plastics ban**, and waste management improvements.

The process of EMS implementation consisted of an initial review (PLAN) phase, after which specific objectives were set (DO phase). The EMS is subjected to periodic review. In 2020 a progress report was drafted to assess the main achievements to date and the challenges faced by the office (CHECK-phase), to identify areas of improvement and to delineate achievable targets in the next years until the next planning report (ACT phase).

Greening strategy in FAO El Salvador

At the start of 2020, FAO's Country Office in El Salvador implemented a plan for greening the office. In order to achieve LEED certification, several green initiatives have been introduced, including the introduction of energy-saving appliances throughout the office facilities, remodeling the office to include measures designed to reduce water consumption and GHG emissions, and the installation of a solar panel system designed to save 3 tCO₂e annually. Already the office has substituted 200 fluorescent lighting tubes with LED fixtures resulting in **46 percent reduction in energy consumption**. The office has also formed a group of green volunteers committed to greening measures.



Volunteer initiatives in FAO's Regional Office for the North East



At FAO's Regional Office for the North East (FAORNE) in Cairo, Egypt, a group of volunteers are championing greening initiatives. This includes a **Nile cleaning event**, in coordination with other UN agencies. Office measures include efforts to improve waste management (for example, by implementing a scheme to recycle used coffee capsules), the feasibility assessment of a solar energy system installation, and the introduction of LED technology. The office is rented free of charge and FAO has no important expenses linked to office utilization. This

therefore attests to the initiatives being undertaken by inherent environmental motivation and marks a departure away from purely economic drivers.

Green procurement initiative

In FAO's Country Office in Dhaka, Bangladesh, an initiative is under way to implement an extensive **eco-friendly procurement scheme**. The project aims to utilize jute products, promote the use of recycled materials, and the use of local wood and carpenters. A wide range of office implements are targeted, including furniture and various stationary supplies. They are designed to be long-lasting, eco-friendly, cost-efficient, and able to promote the local economy and traditions.



Solar photovoltaic systems

The promotion of renewable energy is essential in long-term climate change mitigation strategies and a transition away from a fossil-fuel based economy. Furthermore, it helps to decrease grid reliance and ensure business continuity in areas that experience periodic power supply issues, reduces operating costs in the long-term, improves the Organization's green image, and supports the local economy.



In 2020, four solar hybrid photovoltaic (PV) systems have been commissioned in FAO decentralized offices. The systems installed in the FAO country offices in **Mauritania** and **Uganda** have been realized thanks to the collaboration between the FAO CER team and the UNDP Green Energy team in Copenhagen. The other two systems were spontaneous initiatives acquired through local procurement processes in the FAO Sub Regional Office for Southern Africa in **Zimbabwe** and the FAO Country Office in **Togo**.



The four systems together make **81 kWp** of PV panels installed and **89 kWh** of battery storage; the solar energy produced is approximately **81 784 kWh/year**, which results in total projected annual savings of **USD 16 825** and **55.4 tCO₂e/year**, equivalent to 6.4 households' energy use for one year.



In addition to these remarkable achievements, during the pandemic crisis and worldwide lockdown in early 2020, many FAO country offices in Africa (e.g., Zimbabwe, Lesotho) have decided to invest in the procurement of small backup solar PV systems to ensure business continuity in critical FAO staff homes. This represents a significant mind-set change from previous times wherein the first choice for backup power was diesel generators.

Framework for the future

September 2020 marked the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2030. There is still much to do to ensure their implementation. However, the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have also presented novel opportunities.

The chance to **build back better** should expedite a recovery that promotes social and environmental sustainability and awareness, the preservation of biodiversity, and the mitigation of anthropogenic perturbation, through a transition to more sustainable behavior.

Despite lower travel emissions, we must remain vigilant. The pandemic has meant that the manufacture of virgin plastics from fossil fuels has become less expensive than recycling, due to the collapse in petroleum demand and oil prices. When this is coupled with the tremendous disposal of personal protective equipment, and lifestyle changes that have increased plastic use, the challenge of overcoming plastic pollution has become ever more complex. We must remain committed to technological, behavioral, and structural change as the only way to reduce emissions and facilitate better and increased environmental stewardship in the long term.



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