Evaluations at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) promote deeper understandings of how FAO has made progress towards its organizational goals and contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global, regional and country levels, analysing what worked, what did not work, and why. Evaluations of the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) thereby provide Members and FAO Management an objective basis for their decisions at policy and operational levels. With the 2030 Agenda, evaluations are increasingly situating FAO contributions in broader multipartner efforts towards the achievement of SDGs. To more effectively capture this aspect, OED expanded collaboration with evaluation communities in partner organizations and in the regions and countries. The Office also accelerated capacity development of national evaluation partners through the community of practice. This document provides a summary of findings from evaluations most recently completed in 2021, and lists of evaluations that are ongoing and planned. They are categorized as (1) corporate thematic evaluations, (2) regional syntheses of past evaluations, (3) project/programme evaluations, (4) emergency and resilience evaluations, (5) country programme evaluations.

For each evaluation presented, icons have been included – where available – with the link to the document page, the link to the video, and the SDGs and FAO Four Betters to which the evaluation refers.
1. Corporate thematic evaluations

Corporate thematic evaluations cover the work of the Organization on a specific policy, topic or area of work at global, regional and country level. They are conducted to assess FAO’s contributions to the achievement of its strategic objectives and its progress in each programme priority area, as defined in the new Strategic Framework 2022–31. Corporate thematic evaluations are conducted in response to requests by FAO Members and Management and the results are systematically presented to FAO Governing Bodies through the Programme Committee.

Joint evaluation on collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies (RBAs)

The United Nations Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) – FAO, the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) – collaborate in many forms, from joint advocacy, policy and technical work to joint projects. This is the first independent evaluation of collaboration among the UN RBAs. It has been jointly undertaken by the evaluation offices of FAO, IFAD and WFP. The evaluation’s primary objective was to assess whether and to what extent RBA collaboration is contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, particularly at the country level.

The evaluation found that collaboration among the RBAs is a daily reality, reflecting the shared strengths and commitment of these distinctly different organizations. Although competition for resources continues in some contexts, there is widespread recognition of complementarity. In some cases, the current collaborative management processes are not the best way to stimulate joint work, with some types of collaboration imposing higher transaction costs. The operating context for the RBAs is dynamic, with significant potential, and where realism and pragmatism are the keys to meaningful and effective collaboration. At present, efforts to promote RBA collaboration are not fully grounded in an accurate understanding of the conditions in which it is most effectively pursued and the formal statements of corporate commitment to collaboration reflect this.

FAO’s role and work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of microorganisms to fight antimicrobial compounds, reducing the efficacy of treating diseases in humans, animals, and plants. AMR risk is outpacing human population growth, owing to misuse of antimicrobials in large quantities in food systems, and is a serious threat to food security and sustainable development. FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is supporting countries in developing and implementing their One Health National Action Plans on AMR. The eventual aim is to ensure sustainable use of antimicrobials to minimize AMR risks, in alignment with the Global Action Plan on AMR. The scope of the evaluation covers FAO’s entire work on AMR up to early 2020 and its role in the global AMR architecture. A key message of the evaluation is that, although the Organization has a strong mandate to work on AMR and is well-positioned to deliver, FAO needs to develop its own long-term strategy to guide its work on AMR, reflecting a programmatic approach.

FAO’s support to climate action (SDG 13) and the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change (2017)

The evaluation of FAO’s contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG 13), including an assessment of the implementation of FAO’s Strategy on Climate Change (2017), was carried out in 2020 and was both summative and formative. The evaluation found that FAO has made relevant contributions to SDG 13, the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework by enhancing national capacities for adaptation and resilience to climate change, through knowledge products, tools, guidance and by mobilizing climate finance. Besides, FAO was key to inclusion of agriculture in global negotiations on climate change and instrumental in linking agriculture to National Adaptation Plans and nationally determined contributions. Nevertheless, FAO has not yet sufficiently mainstreamed its work on climate action and climate-related disasters into its programming and operations. The evaluation recommends FAO to develop a corporate narrative on climate change and food systems, reflecting it in the new FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31, guiding the new Strategy on Climate Change and cascade it into all offices, divisions and levels.
FAO’s COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme

The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme aims to enhance coordination of FAO’s response to the crisis and its related resource mobilization. This report identifies good practices and lessons learned emerging from programme implementation, specific to the humanitarian response and the provision of knowledge products and data services in support of COVID-19 recovery efforts. The report advises that the identified good practices and lessons learned be considered and mainstreamed, when appropriate, by Management, technical teams and relevant offices into the Organization’s workflows and processes, and future similar crisis/scenarios.

2. Regional syntheses of past evaluations

In 2020, OED produced for the first time five regional syntheses covering all categories of evaluations managed and completed between 2014 and 2019, identifying results, lessons learned and trends, in order to enable more informed discussions at the Regional Conferences. As a follow up to this work and keeping in mind the lessons learned from the previous round, OED is conducting syntheses for selected regional conferences in 2021: the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) and the Regional Conference for Africa (ARC). These reports would systematically document patterns observed across evaluations to support informed decisions on priorities and actions for their regions, enhance the use of evaluation reports, and create demand for regionally-focused evaluations.

3. Project/programme evaluations

These evaluations review individual programmes and projects, or cluster of projects on specific topics funded by voluntary contributions. They support accountability to funding partners, FAO Management and beneficiaries, inform decision-making for future projects and contribute to learning. FAO systematically evaluates all projects with a budget over USD 4 million. Project evaluations include visits to the project sites and interviews with project beneficiaries in order to understand the project impact, achievement of objectives, as well as its relevance with respect to country, regional and international development goals.


Global

Developing Capacity for Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Selected Countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia

Caucasus and Central Asian countries are strongly committed to promoting food security and nutrition among their populations. Although good progress has been made by most countries in the region, food insecurity and malnutrition remain relatively high and greater efforts are needed to address their root causes. Moreover, wide gaps in terms of income, food security and nutrition, and access to social services have caused substantial migration from rural areas to neighbouring countries. The FAO project Developing Capacity for Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Selected Countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia aims to promote cross-sectoral collaboration between agriculture, health, education and social protection sectors by carrying out six pilot projects in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These pilots build capacities at field and governmental level and provide an evidence base to build political commitment and coherence for the development of policies, legislations and programmes at the country, regional and global levels.

The evaluation concluded that overall the project has been successful. The building of operational capacity among stakeholders and beneficiaries is processing well through the

PLUS:

3 Interregional evaluations
10 Global evaluations

OVER 90 Countries
OVER 40 Project/programme evaluations
ongoing pilots, while high-level coordination and policy dialogue, and the contribution to global policy processes and frameworks need more time to materialize. The evaluation makes a number of recommendations to further enhance project design, implementation, monitoring and sustainability, and proposes a second phase of at least one to two years to consolidate and expand achievements.

Projects related to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security funded by Germany

FAO has been promoting the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) in several countries and Germany has significantly contributed by financially supporting FAO’s activities. The programme contributed through multi-stakeholder platforms to an inclusive dialogue which led, in most countries, to the emergence of a common vision on land governance and positively influenced the land reform processes. It also triggered changes in mindset which are needed for long-term improvements at country level. Results have shown that the VGGT, while being international principles of land policy, can be translated into concrete actions at the local level. The evaluation stressed the need for greater attention on developing activities to be carried out in local communities which result in defined, precise and achievable gains on governance of tenure, and to continue working on women and youth land access issues.

Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM)

The Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM) is a mechanism through which FAO’s resource partners make unearmarked or lightly earmarked voluntary contributions to support achievement of FAO’s Strategic Objectives. OED conducted an evaluation of the current phase of FMM (2018–2021). The purpose of the evaluation was to inform FMM’s main stakeholders about the fund’s overall performance and also inform its next phase (2022–2025). The evaluation assessed, FMM’s strategic positioning; effectiveness of the revised governance and implementation arrangements; key contributions to the achievement of FAO’s Strategic Objectives; and the adaptability of FMM to respond to unplanned scenarios and changes.

The evaluation found FMM to be of strategic relevance to FAO as a vehicle for financing innovation, under-funded or emerging areas with flexibility to allocate voluntary contributions to FAO priorities. The evaluation also found evidence of catalytic and transformative elements, primarily in past projects. However, there is considerable scope for improving the FMM so that it contributes to results under the new FAO Strategic Framework.

Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policies II (MAFAP II)

Governments have turned to FAO for support in identifying and assessing options for reforming policies on food and agriculture through the Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policies (MAFAP) programme. While the first phase of FAO’s efforts concentrated more on conducting policy analysis and measuring public expenditures, this second phase built on the first phase’s outcomes to support policy reforms across Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. MAFAP has been found to be an effective and well-positioned influencer of policy reforms in the agricultural sector. However, there are areas of improvement for this programme, including:
Evaluations Update 2021

i) increased resources to better address increasing policy support demand; ii) more strategic planning; iii) more formal institutionalization and more engagement with civil society and the private sector; iv) more coherence at country level in conducting preliminary analysis; and v) improvement to its knowledge management system in order not to lose its institutional memory.

Integrating Agriculture into National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag)

The Integrating Agriculture into National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag) programme, jointly coordinated by UNDP and FAO, worked with eleven countries to identify and integrate climate adaptation measures into national planning and budgeting processes, in support of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG 2, Zero Hunger; and SDG 13, Climate Action) and the Paris Agreement. The evaluation assessed programme relevance and the achievement and sustainability of programme results among other dimensions.

The evaluation found that NAP-Ag’s country-driven, multi-sector and multi-level approach allowed for ample engagement of stakeholders, contributed to establish coordination mechanisms and promoted ownership of results. The programme supported the development of institutional capacities, directly influenced the integration of agriculture adaptation options into countries’ plans, practices and policies, and supported countries in accessing climate finance. NAP-Ag also contributed to global climate change adaptation efforts by supporting countries to accomplish the work outlined by ‘the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). NAP-Ag also influenced the inclusion of gender aspects adaptation options in many countries. FAO should continue promoting the adoption of programme outcomes in countries’ systems and further support countries to mobilize financial support to scale up lessons learned from NAP-Ag. Private sector involvement should be increased to guarantee the implementation of certain climate adaptation options. Strategic stakeholders should be engaged to support gender mainstreaming efforts in agriculture climate adaptation options.

Selected Ongoing and Upcoming Project/Programme Evaluations in 2022–2023

- Targeted support for agricultural statistical innovation at FAO • Ongoing
- System for earth observation data access, processing and analysis for land monitoring • Ongoing
- Participatory assessment of land degradation and sustainable land management in grassland and pastoral areas systems • Ongoing
- FAO forest law enforcement, governance and trade programme - Phase III • Ongoing
- Supporting implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests • Ongoing
- Livestock environmental assessment and performance partnership • Ongoing
- GEF cluster of global- and country-level projects – Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT 2021 cluster) • Planned
- Scaling-up the sustainable management of the fall armyworm in Africa, the Near East and Asia • Planned
- Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance Partnership • Planned
- Coastal Fisheries Initiative • Planned
Regional and National

AFRICA

Strengthening community resilience to climate change in Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe districts

The project, implemented by a variety of local partners under FAO’s lead, was found well-aligned to key policy documents on climate change and responding to well-assessed needs. A baseline study and a hotspot mapping assessment identified issues and precise locations for support. Implementation was slow and delayed. A number of challenges including human resource gaps, climate hazards such as Cyclone Idai, prolonged droughts and COVID-19 lockdowns cumulatively affected planning, timing and sequence of project activities. The project received a one-year no-cost extension, enabling the completion of most expected results. The project generated more tangible results at community level than at the policy level. A climate-sensitive farmer field school (FFS) curriculum was produced, and a pool of skilled FFS trainers. Supported communities are now more aware of the effects of climate change and had attained skills to build resilience to counter the negative effects of climate vulnerability. The project positively influenced land conservation in Neno district. Efforts were made to address deforestation through enhanced natural regeneration of degraded woodlands. Mothers and child caregivers adopted health-seeking behaviours for their child (including improved nutritional care). The project also supported the vulnerable and resource poor communities affected by Cyclone Idai. The FFS equitably engaged a mix of men and women. However, the more vulnerable persons met by the evaluation team (notably those hit by extreme weather shocks) did not consider environmental conservation as their immediate priority. Overall, the practices for increasing agricultural production were adopted by at least 80 percent of beneficiaries, while those for mitigating the effects of climate change were adapted by only 60 percent of beneficiaries. The recommendations call for more timely and flexible operations and plead for a follow-up phase to continue strengthening community resilience to the effects of climate change and to strengthen policy links.

Food-loss reduction through improved postharvest handling and value-addition of key fruits and vegetables (Ethiopia)

The Food-loss reduction through improved postharvest handling and value-addition of key fruits and vegetables project was implemented by FAO Ethiopia over the period 2016–2019. By tackling postharvest losses, the project addressed one of the major challenges faced by producers. Farmers have adopted project postharvest management practices, techniques and technologies that have helped to reduce losses and increase food security by boosting income and making more produce available for household consumption. The results will be sustainable because of the economic gains the farmers are seeing and the adaptability of practices and technologies. Studies conducted as part of the project provided evidence of the size and significance of post-harvest losses, which were previously undocumented. Evidence produced contributed to increase institutional attention on postharvest management.
Disposal of persistent organic pollutants and obsolete pesticides and implementation of sound pesticides management programme in Benin

This project Disposal of persistent organic pollutants and obsolete pesticides and implementation of sound pesticides management programme in Benin (GCP/BEN/056/GFF) was implemented by FAO and the Government of Benin from March 2015 to September 2021. The project is consistent with the country and its partners’ priorities. It was able to implement the farmer field school approach, integrated production and pest management (IPPM) and relevant partnerships. Nevertheless, gaps in pesticide life cycle management were identified and corrective measures proposed. Regulatory framework has been strengthened as well as national capacities in decontaminating polluted sites, securing obsolete pesticides and persistent organic pollutants, analysing polluted soil samples, recycling and managing empty pesticide containers, and testing and adopting IPPM-based alternative techniques and systems.

SELECTED ONGOING AND UPCOMING PROJECT/PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS IN 2022–2023

- Strengthening capacities of agricultural producers to cope with climate change for increased food security through the farmer field school approach • Ongoing
- Agricultural climate resilience enhancement initiative (ACREI) • Planned
- Support towards the operationalization of the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP) • Planned
- Project for enhancing livelihoods, food security and maritime safety through increased resilience of fishing communities dependent on coral reef fisheries in the African coastal countries of the Indian Ocean • Planned
- Agriculture for economic growth and food security/nutrition to mitigate migration flows (the Gambia) • Planned
- Afikepo – Nutrition Programme in Malawi • Planned
- WFP and FAO joint early recovery project in response to COVID-19 (Mali) • Planned
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Project for the restoration of livelihoods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Newly Merged Districts have seen a prolonged military conflict leading to the widespread displacement of its population and damages and losses to the agricultural lands, irrigation, water harvesting structures, and livestock populations. Since 2015, the rehabilitation of the displaced population is ongoing but slow due to loss of livelihoods and reduced income opportunities. To support the restoration of livelihoods, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), FAO undertook the “Project for the restoration of livelihoods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts” which involved training farmers on climate-smart agriculture practices, rehabilitating government facilities/infrastructures, operationalizing small-scale enterprises, and supporting agriculture and livestock production. The evaluation found that while the project was mostly successful in meeting output targets, a critical review of the following elements can further improve programme delivery: realistic target setting, market-led initiatives for value chain development, operation and maintenance plans for rehabilitated schemes, gender-specific interventions, and incorporating anticipated procurement-related delays in the project design.

Australia Balochistan Agri-business Programme – Phase Two (AusABBA II)

The Australia Balochistan Agri-business Programme (AusABBA Phase II) (GCP/PAK/141/AUL) has been implemented by FAO in collaboration with the Government of Balochistan in six south-western districts with the objective to engage households in profitable agribusiness-based livelihoods and diversified strategies, and creating an enabling environment to increase their incomes, improve food security and enhance nutritional status. Working closely with men and women’s community organizations, farmers marketing collectives and mutual marketing organizations, AusABBA II has accomplished to establish 11 value chains businesses in dates, onions, grapes, cumin, tomatoes, alfalfa, carrots, pomegranate, sugar-melons, livestock fattening and wool, providing support in key interventions such as crops and livestock productivity, water resources management, market linkages and agribusiness. AusABBA II’s inclusive market system development approach is encouraging, innovative and has proven as one of FAO’s flagship projects in the region, with an enormous potential for replication by relevant government departments and other development actors in Balochistan.

Sustainable management of mountainous forest and land resources under climate change conditions (Kyrgyzstan)

The project was designed to address the following interlinked barriers preventing sustainable land and forest management outcomes and building resilience to climate change in Kyrgyz mountain ecosystems:
• inadequate legal framework for sustainable forest and land management;
• inadequate land tenure reforms;
• outdated approaches to sustainable forest and land management; and
• limited capacity of local institutions.

The project’s overall objective is to enhance the enabling environment in the forestry and agricultural sectors and sustain the flow of ecosystem services, including enhancement of carbon stocks in forests and agro-ecosystems through the sustainable management and enhanced productivity of mountainous silvo-agro-pastoral ecosystems and to improve productivity and mountain livelihoods in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Overall, the evaluation rated the project as “moderately satisfactory”, with several examples of positive new approaches introduced by the project into forestry, agriculture and pasture management. The evaluation included specific recommendations not only to FAO, but also to the national forestry service. One of the innovative recommendations is to re-visit the project sites in five to ten years to check certain success factors, such as the tree survival rates.
SELECTED ONGOING AND UPCOMING PROJECT/PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS IN 2022–2023

- Implementation of global and regional oceanic fisheries conventions and related instruments in the Pacific small island developing states (SIDS) (Interregional) • Ongoing
- Restoring the water supply for food production and livelihoods in post conflict areas (Iraq) • Ongoing
- Technical assistance to support the establishment of a National Animal Identification System (NAIS) in Georgia • Ongoing
- Securing biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in China’s Dongting Lake Protected Area (FSP) • Ongoing
- Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH): Strengthening the enabling environment for food security and nutrition (Bangladesh) • Ongoing
- Institutionalization of food safety in Bangladesh for safer food • Ongoing
- Ex/post independent evaluation of FAO’s support to integrated dairy scheme development in Afghanistan • Ongoing
- Strengthening capacity in the agriculture and land-use sectors in Mongolia for enhanced transparency in implementation and monitoring of Mongolia’s nationally determined contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement • Planned
- Enabling transboundary cooperation for sustainable management of the Indonesian Seas • Planned
- Restoring subsistence and commercial agriculture in FATA (Indonesia; Timor-Leste) • Planned
- Strengthening capacity in the agriculture and land-use sectors for enhanced transparency in implementation and monitoring of national determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement in Papua New Guinea • Planned
- Strengthening capacity for monitoring environmental emissions under the Paris Agreement in Bangladesh • Planned
- Support to women cooperatives and associations in the agri-food sector of Lebanon • Planned

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Implementing the socio-ecosystem connectivity approach to conserve and sustainable use biodiversity in the Caribbean Region of Colombia

The project Implementing the Socio-Ecosystem Approach to Conserve and Sustainable Use Biodiversity in the Caribbean Region of Colombia was financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), implemented and executed by FAO. The results of the evaluation highlight project relevance to reduce the degradation and fragmentation of the strategic ecosystems of the Caribbean Colombian area, increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agricultural and forestry production. The project was also found to be highly effective in obtaining the expected results, exceeding in some cases, the established goals. Likewise, the processes and mechanisms implemented by the project for the involvement of relevant stakeholders generated a very high ownership. Due to the successes achieved, the evaluation identified good practices and lessons learned that may be useful for the design of similar projects. Among the main areas identified for improvement there is to improve the design of goals related to the impact on policy instruments and the determination of co-financing by the project partners; the institutionalization of the Regional Strategy of Socio-ecosystem Connectivity to ensure its replicability and the revision of the Tool for monitoring the effectiveness in the management of the GEF.
Strengthening the adaptation capacity of the Chilean fisheries and aquaculture sector to climate change

The project Strengthening the adaptive capacity to climate change in the fisheries and aquaculture sector of Chile, with support from GEF, sought to reduce the vulnerability and increase the adaptive capacity to climate change in the fisheries and aquaculture sector of Chile. Implemented in four remote coves, the project was geared towards coastal communities through high-quality in-person participatory capacity building sessions, raising awareness about topics such as productive diversification, adaptation to climate change, aquaculture and tourism. Despite there being several changes in civil servants and government authorities, as well as certain delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest in the country, the project managed to progress towards the formulated objective, was relevant to the actual situation and suited to the needs of the beneficiaries. Lessons learned were also generated to improve the formulation and management of this type of project in the future. Notably, the evaluation found that climate change adaptation workshops have a high potential for replicability across different geographic settings in the region.

Disposal of obsolete pesticides including persistent organic pesticides, promotion of alternatives and strengthening pesticides management in the Caribbean

Caribbean nations, in particular small island developing States (SIDS), have been traditionally vulnerable to the entry of potentially harmful, unregistered and unregulated pesticides. In many of these countries, the legislation and regulations for managing pesticides are fragmented and at various stages of development. Under the overall objective to promote sound management of pesticides in the Caribbean, the project kick-started various activities covering pesticide life-cycle management in the region, drafted a regional model pesticide legislation and facilitated different vital elements. It specifically contributed to the collection and shipment of obsolete pesticides (319 tonnes) from all 11 project countries and polybrominated biphenyl (PCBs) (54 tonnes) from four countries. However, it has not been able to successfully replicate, scale up nationally and build capacities with government stakeholders evenly across all countries. Further follow-up and support are required to ensure sustainability and impact in the region and the project countries and thus the engagement of the private sector and civil society organizations will be critical.

SELECTED ONGOING AND UPCOMING PROJECT/PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS IN 2022–2023

- Evaluation of Mesoamerica without Hunger Programme: More effective institutional frameworks to improve family farming, and food and nutritional security (Inter Regional) • Ongoing
- Developing organisational capacity for ecosystem stewardship and livelihoods in Caribbean small-scale fisheries (StewardFish) • Ongoing
- Sustainable management of bycatch in Latin America and Caribbean trawl fisheries (Inter Regional) • Ongoing
- Climate change adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean fisheries sector (CC4Fish) (Regional) • Ongoing
- Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean 2025 Initiative (HFLAC Initiative 2025) – Contribution from the Federative Republic of Brazil • Planned
- Improving food security and strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations • Planned
- Support to the Comprehensive Development Plan for Central America in the framework of the European Union’s overall response to COVID-19 • Planned
- Enhancing Cuba’s institutional and technical capacities in the agriculture and land-use sectors for enhanced transparency under the Paris Agreement • Planned
- Farmers’ Organizations for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific – Action in the Caribbean (FO4ACP – Caribbean) • Planned
Decentralized Evaluations

After the acceptance of its proposal to the Programme Committee in 2020, OED developed and implemented a transitional plan for decentralization of all single country projects final evaluations, and created the OED Decentralization Support Team (DST). The process included the creation of new capacities in each of the Regional Offices, with the recruitment of five Regional Evaluation Specialists. The role of these Regional Evaluation Specialists is to manage decentralized project evaluations, but also to ensure effective use of evaluation results in their region. While the responsibility for these evaluations has now moved to the Regional Offices (with strong technical support from the OED DST), it is expected that the Regional and Country Offices Senior Management will have more ownership of evaluation processes and will encourage the use of the evaluation results for better projects and programmes. In some regions, the Regional Evaluation Specialist is already closely working with Programme and Knowledge Management units to develop innovative ways to share evaluation results and create a demand for them. In parallel, the OED DST is facilitating exchange of experience among the various regions, and is working on several tools to build capacities in the Organization such as, for example, an e-learning course on evaluation management for all decentralized offices. These are first steps towards building a greater evaluation culture in FAO.

OED role on impact evaluations

Impact is generally defined as “the extent to which an intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects” (OECD-DAC 2019). As specified in the Charter for OED presented to the 103rd Session of the Programme Committee, through impact evaluations OED seeks to identify and measure long-term changes induced by FAO interventions.

Starting from the analysis of different definitions of impact and considering the FAO context, OED defines impact evaluation as a study dedicated to assessing significant changes triggered by FAO intervention(s) on people’s well-being and livelihoods as well as on their environment through a systematic evaluation of overall higher-level effects, including positive and negative, intended and unintended. Depending on factors such as the accountability structure, impact time frame and measurability, higher-level immediate and intermediary outcomes may be measured as a proxy for impact. In such cases the study will also assess the potential for eventual impact.

Its impact evaluations cover work implemented by FAO but are not positioned to test programme innovations or directly address policy questions, which are better suited for teams implementing such activities. Further, these are underpinned by its primary principles of independence and impartiality among others. OED engagement on impact evaluation also adheres to the following: i) value added, considering the usefulness of the study and its implications on organizational learning; ii) using a tailored approach and methodology, given the diverse FAO context; iii) and the feasibility of the study, taking into account the costs and data availability.

In terms of its scope, the focus of OED impact evaluations is at the thematic/programmatic level, covering areas with substantial volume of FAO work that also support organizational learning, rather than at individual projects. The overall intent is to determine whether the Organization has contributed to change and impact in a meaningful line of causality.

More details can be found in the note, which can be accessed here.
4. Emergency and resilience programme evaluations

Emergency and resilience evaluations in OED

The emergency and resilience portfolio follows a programmatic approach to evaluations through cluster, programme, thematic, real-time and inter-agency evaluations. The portfolio looks at a wide spectrum of projects and programmes developed in response to crises and covering main thematic areas of emergency and resilience response efforts. This includes projects in all surge activation/Level 3 countries, as well as those conducted as part of the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) or the Refugee Response Plans (RRP). Projects related to transboundary animal health and plant pests and diseases and food safety threats and crises and emerging pandemic threats in animal health, including thematic scale-up activations such as the Desert Locusts Response are also covered by the emergency and resilience portfolio.

OED has a dedicated emergency and rehabilitation team that plans, clusters, manages and conducts emergency and resilience evaluations; acts as focal points for the Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) and with the relevant Regional, Subregional and Country Offices; and supports decentralized emergency and resilience evaluations. The team has been created as emergency and resilience evaluations require a greater degree of flexibility in time frames and specific methodological experience. The topics and coverage focus need to be aligned to the humanitarian programme cycle and delivery modalities. FAO follows the OECD and the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) guidance and criteria for the conduct of humanitarian evaluations. Since 2021, following the evaluation on FAO’s contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus, an HDP lens will be applied to these evaluations.

Creating peaceful societies through women’s improved access to management of natural resources, land tenure rights and economic empowerment in Sierra Leone

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the project Creating peaceful societies through women’s improved access to management of natural resources, land tenure rights and economic empowerment in Sierra Leone (UNJP/SIL/050/PBF), jointly implemented by FAO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) between 2019 and 2020. The project aimed at addressing the two underlying causes of conflicts in Sierra Leone – gender discrimination and fragmented land governance – by focusing on: i) more effective and gender-inclusive land tenure governance; and ii) women’s economic empowerment through skills, knowledge, gender-sensitive financial services and organizational capacity.

The project was clearly appropriate and strategic to the main peacebuilding goals and challenges in Sierra Leone. It was also clear that the project has successfully created a momentum for women and their communities at large to more confidently address conflict issues in the future. Women’s participation in design and management of income-generating economic activities was particularly successful.

FAO’s contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus 2014–2020

The Evaluation of FAO’s contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus revisits and brings together in a coherent narrative the many approaches of conflict management and peace-sustaining work carried out over the years on natural resources management and rights-based frameworks. At the same time, it analyses the body of work developed through emergency activities, in crisis and conflict contexts – shaped by the ever-stronger recognition of the need to focus on longer-term resilience.
The evaluation recognizes that the heart of FAO’s work in prioritizing and implementing an HDP approach has been at country level and has pieced together a number of examples from across countries to inform the narrative and provide lessons. The main overarching message from the evaluation is that FAO is ideally placed to invest in a major corporate effort to mainstream and adopt HDP nexus ways of working as part of its organizational DNA.

Five FAO SIDA-funded projects in Chad, Cameroon, Mali and Niger

The evaluation seeks to contribute to organization-wide learning by drawing lessons from the multi-year funded resilience projects implemented in the Sahel and Cameroon and making recommendations for future programming. FAO intervened in these countries to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households affected by the crisis in the Sahel through promoting sustainable livelihood. The evaluation found that the projects contributed to an improvement in animal and agricultural production and strengthened social cohesion among the different communities. The evaluation also found that a multi-year funding mechanism is flexible and allows a transition from a humanitarian to a development approach if used efficiently. In its future programming, FAO should promote an integrated approach, targeting the same beneficiaries enabling them to engage in productive activities and sustainable natural resource management. In fragile and emergency contexts, FAO should adapt its tools and procedures for more flexibility and adaptive management.

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE)

FAO is a strategic partner of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. OED actively engages in the management of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE).

Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) assesses the progress on the operationalization of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee agenda on this topic since 2017. The evaluation also captures best practices and provides recommendations to further mainstream GEEWG into humanitarian action. The evaluation employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods and includes an analysis of humanitarian responses in ten countries (Bangladesh, Colombia, Iraq, Nigeria, Chad, Myanmar, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen). Based on in-depth data collection and analysis for Bangladesh, Colombia, Iraq, Nigeria, the evaluation produced four case study briefs in addition to this report. The independent evaluation team found that since 2017 the IASC made notable progress in integrating GEEWG into its humanitarian responses, especially in protracted crises. Success factors contributing to mainstreaming GEEWG into humanitarian responses included developing the IASC Gender Accountability Framework, cluster level and agency-specific guidance on gender mainstreaming, greater availability of gender advisors through the Gender Standby Capacity Project and cluster-lead agency surge mechanisms as well as increasing application of the Gender with Age Marker.

SELECTED ONGOING AND UPCOMING EMERGENCY AND RESILIENCE EVALUATIONS

- Peacebuilding Fund Synthesis • Ongoing
- Agricultural and livestock recovery plan post/Cyclone Idai • Ongoing
- Global Network against Food Crises Partnership Programme Synthesis • Ongoing
- Supporting emergency needs, early recovery and longer/term resilience in Syria agriculture sector • Ongoing
- Real-time evaluation of FAO’s response to the desert locust upsurge (phase III) • Ongoing
- Support economic growth through optimized agricultural value chains in the West Bank • Planned

SELECTED ONGOING AND UPCOMING INTER-AGENCY HUMANITARIAN EVALUATIONS

- Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen • Planned
- Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 • Planned
5. Country programme evaluations

Country programme evaluations (CPEs) aim to identify lessons learned and provide recommendations on how FAO programmes can be better oriented at country level, to make them more relevant to the needs of the country and to strengthen the impact of the organizational efforts towards the achievement of the Members’ global goals. Usually, CPEs are carried out in the last year of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) providing recommendations to strengthen FAO’s strategic relevance in the country and to optimize the use of evaluation results in the next planning cycle.


FAO’s country programme in Sierra Leone 2012–2019

The agriculture sector in Sierra Leone accounts for 60 percent of GDP and 58 percent of total employment. More than 58 percent of the country’s population live in rural areas and 86.1 percent of this population are engaged in smallholder subsistence agricultural production. Ten years of civil conflict and the Ebola epidemic in 2014 negatively affected food security and the country’s overall socio-economic situation. This evaluation aims to identify lessons learned and provide strategic recommendations on how FAO programmes can be better oriented in Sierra Leone. The evaluation found evidence of significant and sustainable results in a range of areas of FAO’s activities, including policy-related work, from adoption of legislation to policy influence, piloting of approaches, and standards and regulatory frameworks. Likewise, results leading to livelihoods improvements, empowerment and adoption of more sustainable organizational practices, technologies and skills were found. Nevertheless, the programme failed to aggregate activities and interventions in a programmatic and coherent portfolio.

FAO should use the development of the new CPF as a way to re-design its strategic footprint in the country and reach its full potential, despite the limiting factors.”
**FAO’s country programme in Morocco 2017–2020**

The Morocco Country Programme (2017–2020) was evaluated to feed into the development of the new programming cycle of FAO and the UN System in Morocco for the coming period. The analysis of this evaluation is based on primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, triangulated with information available in secondary documentary sources, leading to different conclusions.

FAO’s positioning is considered as highly relevant to national policy priorities and country needs. The achievements in the field of sustainable management of water resources and oases ecosystems are particularly strong points of the FAO portfolio in Morocco. The contribution of South-South Cooperation projects was below what could be expected. The evaluation recommends the next CPF to build on the achievements made throughout the current CPF by reorienting FAO-Morocco cooperation towards the strategic objective of facilitating the transition to a green economy and blue growth. Sustainable and equitable development, empowerment of stakeholders and territorial governance, in the form of evolving structural projects, are areas that could constitute strong axes of the future CPF.

**FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean 2017–2020**

This evaluation had the purpose of assessing the performance and added value of the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC), taking into account the role of the regional initiatives as mechanisms to facilitate such work. It was found that the support provided, especially for the escalation of results, has been substantive and useful, however, there is no institutional strategy that promotes the identification of factors that promote upscaling of programmes based on organizational learning. Recommendations were drawn up to improve the relevance of the work around the regional initiatives, as well as to promote the scaling up of programmes, the implementation of policies for the inclusion of gender perspectives and of indigenous, Afro-descendant and tribal peoples, the generation and use of evidence as a basis for decision-making, and to address the new context derived from COVID-19.

**FAO’s contribution to the Republic of Indonesia 2016–2020**

There are numerous risks to the sustainability and stability of Indonesia’s farming system, food production system, supply chains, and ecosystems. The evaluation aims to answer two essential questions: whether FAO is doing what is needed and whether it is making a difference. This evaluation recommends that FAO support the green and blue (land and sea) preparedness and adaptation plans, as well as early warning systems. The evaluation further recommends that FAO ramp up its support for a national decision support system that adopts a food systems approach to provide policymakers with the best analytical evidence and data available to guide new public policies and regulations. Many of the conclusions and recommendations call for policy and regulatory reform. The evaluation recommends that FAO work with Indonesia to establish innovative data management systems, new analysis methods, and analytical tools on agriculture including fisheries and forestry.

**FAO’s contribution to the Republic of Moldova 2016–2019**

Half of the Moldovan population lives in rural areas. However, the rural employment rate is only 39 percent. Income from agricultural activities is low compared to other sectors of the economy. This evaluation seeks to contribute to organization-wide learning by drawing lessons and making recommendations that will be useful for FAO’s future engagement in the Republic of Moldova. FAO provided highly specialized technical expertise to formulate strategies, policies and frameworks, and offer innovative approaches and solutions.
Likewise, the evaluation found evidence of results leading to livelihood improvements, empowerment, and adoption of more sustainable practices and technologies. Nevertheless, FAO should further strive to support the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind. In doing so, FAO should use the knowledge generated to refine programmes in consultation with key partners towards effective and sustainable results.

FAO cooperation programme in Colombia 2015–2019

The evaluation covers FAO’s cooperation programme in Colombia under the Country Programming Framework 2015–2019. The report assesses FAO’s strategic positioning in Colombia, the level of achievement of planned results, and provides perspectives to guide future cooperation between FAO and the Government of Colombia. The evaluation is directed at the Government of Colombia, the staff of the FAO Office in Colombia and its partners that supported the programme, such as the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC), and relevant FAO divisions at headquarters.

The evaluation found that FAO has contributed significantly to the achievement of the expected results, however, additional efforts are required to achieve the planned goals and ensure the sustainability of the results of its projects and programmes. The evaluation recommends that FAO diversify its financial portfolio and mobilize more external resources. It is recommended that FAO Colombia, together with the Regional Office and headquarters, streamline their processes and bureaucratic procedures to improve the efficiency of their operations.

FAO’s country programme in Lebanon 2016–2019

Lebanon is an upper-middle income country with a population of 4.5 million people. The agriculture sector in Lebanon is an important contributor to the livelihood of poor and vulnerable populations, including 1.5 million Syrian refugees hosted in the country. FAO prudently integrated the donor priority and the government priority by designing the resilience programme to support host communities, with emphasis on vulnerable farmers. FAO’s resilience programmes addressed both emergency and longer-term development needs through interventions directly supporting small-scale farmers and agri-food cooperatives, community-based subsector planning, natural resource management and capacity development at different levels.

In the context of the recent financial crisis and renewed interest in agriculture under the United Nations-World Bank Partnership Compact, the evaluation recommends that FAO assist the Government of Lebanon in undertaking the needed transformation of agriculture to a more productive and job-creating sector.

Priority actions include: developing a sector strategy and roadmap towards sustainable and productive agriculture sector; putting in place economic incentives in value chains; building human capital (planning skills of decision makers and entrepreneurial mindset of farmers); and supporting sustainable and productive resource use.

FAO’s country programme in Tunisia 2016–2020

The evaluation of the FAO country programme in Tunisia (2016–2020) examines the relevance of FAO’s strategic positioning in relation to the country’s priorities and the Organization’s comparative advantages as well as FAO’s contributions to expected results in the five priority areas of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) and FAO’s strategic objectives. It is primarily addressed to the Government of Tunisia, the FAO Country Office and their technical and financial partners for the purposes of strategic guidance, enlightenment for decision-making and accountability. The assessment thus makes various recommendations. FAO should first orient its action during the next CPF towards
sustainable, inclusive and job-creating agricultural transformation. This single unifying objective would make it possible to avoid the scattering of its intervention, promote synergies and channel public and private investments. Three strategic axes could thus be retained in connection with the management of the shortage of natural resources, the reduction of inequalities in rural areas and territorial development. FAO should also provide itself with the means to ensure control over its programming and the quality of its operations at the operational level. Finally, the indicators of the expected results matrix of the new CPF should be redefined in order to emphasize sustainability and impact.

Role and work of the Subregional Office for North Africa (SNE) 2017–2020

The evaluation of the role and work of the Subregional Office for North Africa (SNE) responds to a request from its Coordinator, in a context of constant developments at the subregional and institutional level, to lead a collective reflection on the positioning of the SNE and on the adequacy of its organizational processes. The analysis is based on a staff survey, a participatory internal workshop, a series of individual interviews with staff, and a review of many secondary sources. Reviewing the role of SNE, particularly in relation to the relevant Regional and Country Offices, reveals a need for clarification, and the difficult application of the subsidiarity principle. The role of SNE as a technical support hub for Country Offices is patent, and not entirely served by the skill mix available in SNE. As far as implementation is concerned, the assistance bias in favour of the host country, reveals a need to more clearly distinguish the SNE and national Representation’s missions.

6. Other activities

OED is an active member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), which brings together the evaluation functions of 57 Member and observer organizations. The development and safeguarding of norms and standards, the enhancement of professionalization and capacity and the influence of policymaking and operational work through evaluations, are among UNEG’s core objectives. In March 2020, the OED Director was elected as UNEG Chair for the period 2020–2022, exerting leadership for, and proactively participating in the work of this inter-agency network. In 2020–2021, OED contributed to organizing and participated in the annual UNEG Evaluation Weeks. Through UNEG, OED also co-led several inter-agency working groups and initiatives. OED personnel contributed to organizing the first Partnership Forum between UNEG and the Evaluation Network (EvalNet) of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC), which strengthened relations between UNEG Members and evaluation offices of bilateral donor agencies. A hallmark of OED’s involvement was its coordinating role in developing an evaluation summary on COVID-19 and food security, together with IFAD, UNIDO and WFP. In the period 2022–onwards, OED will continue to participate in inter-agency working groups on several topics including evaluation methods, peer reviews, human rights and gender equality, capacity development, evaluating policy influence, system-wide evaluations and evaluations of country level United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

OED is involved in the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition, which is hosted by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC) Secretariat and includes evaluation offices from bilateral, multilateral and international financing institutions, by contributing to several deliverables, such as a lessons note on food security and the first synthesis report of early lessons and emerging evidence on the initial COVID 19 pandemic response and recovery efforts. In the period 2022–onwards, OED expects to continue to work with other evaluation networks such as the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition and the Global Evaluation Initiative, as well as its engagement with regional evaluation organizations.
Responding to the General Assembly Resolution A/RES/69/237 (2014) on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, since 2018 OED initiated support to national evaluation capacity development by increasing the use of national experts, involving national institutions for its evaluations, and including government representatives in its evaluations’ consultative groups. These efforts made its evaluations more context-based and relevant to the country needs. In fact, the goal of national evaluation capacity development is for countries to strengthen their capacity to manage results and assess their own progress against set development goals. For the period 2022–2025, OED will step up its engagement into national evaluation capacity development in synergy with its efforts to enhance the decentralized evaluation function. As part of FAO’s effort to develop capacity in countries to monitor and evaluate policies and programmes, OED will help develop their evaluation capacities by providing technical guidance and support, competence search, peer-learning and mentoring facilitation, experience exchange and by strengthening relationships with national institutions, universities and think tanks. OED has also developed a strategy paper, “OED’s contributions’ to National Evaluation Capacities Development”. Based on this strategy paper, OED will also seek voluntary contributions to support this area of work.

EvalForward Community of Practice

EvalForward, the Community of Practice on Evaluation for Food Security, Agriculture and Rural Development, jointly supported by the evaluation offices of FAO, IFAD, WFP and the CGIAR, offers a platform to develop the evaluation culture and facilitates knowledge sharing among evaluation practitioners worldwide. In 2021, it has expanded its outreach thanks to an increase in membership (over 1,000 members from 109 countries) and a growing presence on social media, and offered a broader range of networking and learning events. The Food Systems Summit Independent Dialogue convened by EvalForward on the role of evaluation in moving towards zero hunger and sustainable food systems contributed to enhance the visibility of evaluation for food systems transformation and featured in the Final Synthesis Report to the Food Systems Summit. Other initiatives include the events organized at the gLOCAL Evaluation Week 2021, webinars and e-panels on evaluation and M&E in agriculture, and the ongoing EvalForward Talks series of peer-to-peer exchanges on different aspects of the evaluation practice. The website includes discussions, blogs, events and resources. Among the plans for the future is a greater engagement to support National Evaluation Capacity Development with a focus on the agriculture, rural development and food security sectors.

For more information
www.evalforward.org
Evaluation reports and management responses are public documents and are available to download at:


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