Evaluation of FAO's work on South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC)

Annex 2. Terms of reference

Contents

Box and tables

1.   Introduction

1.   At its 129th session, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Programme Committee requested an evaluation of FAO's work on South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC).

2.   FAO's involvement with South-South cooperation (SSC) started in 1979. FAO brings together countries that have development solutions with countries that are also interested in applying and adapting them to their own context. Overtime, the SSTC evolved to include Northern countries into South-South partnerships and hence triangular cooperation (TrC) emerged. However, there has not been a comprehensive evaluation of FAO's work on SSC since its inception. This evaluation will take consideration of 2019 Internal Strategic Review of SSTC (FAO, 2019), and benefit from a brief study on SSTC conducted by the Office of Evaluation (OED) in 2020.[1]

3.   These terms of reference (TOR) were developed based on the scoping exercise that included a thorough desk review and initial consultations.[2] It presents the main aspects of SSTC that will be evaluated along with scope, objectives, approach, and methodology in addition to management arrangements and timelines.

4.   Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation will be carried out remotely. If health situations permit, fieldwork will be considered.

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[1] As part of the evaluation of FAO's contributions to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 – 'End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture'.
[2] Key relevant headquarters personnel (PST, PSR, PSU, OSP), senior management and regional SSTC officers/focal points in RAF, RAP, REU, RLC and RNE.

2. Context

2.1 South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system

5.   The United Nations (UN) has defined SSC as 'a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, (including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions' (UN Secretary-General, 2016)[3] and TrC as 'southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries, supported by a developed country(ies) or multilateral organization(s), to implement development cooperation programmes and projects' (UN Secretary-General, 2016).[4] Together with SSC, these two modalities were commonly referred in unison as SSTC.[5]

6.   Originating from the 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference and the notion of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South, SSC promotes a vision of emancipatory, state-led development working in collaboration within the Global South, guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

7.   One of the major cornerstones of SSC is the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA),[6] adopted in 1978 by 138 States at the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 33/134 (UN, 1978a). This action plan has drawn the focus of SSTC primarily to technical cooperation among developing countries, though the notion of SSC goes beyond the 'technical' issues but also includes a broad variety of cooperation forms in the political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental domains.

8.   Since 1990, UN has expended its attention and efforts on SSC alongside the general focus on TCDC. In the 1995 UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General for the first time presented the 'Report of the Secretary-General on the State of South-South cooperation' (UNGA, 1995a), and a voluntary trust fund for the promotion of SSC was established in the same year (UNGA, 1995b). Until 2004, a special unit for TCDC within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was officially changed to 'Special Unit for South-South Cooperation'[7]. Its name was then changed to United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) by the High-level

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[3] It is a tool and reference manual, providing priority actions for UN organizations and agencies to mainstream their support for SSTC. The definitions of SSC are based on Nairobi Outcome Document, submitted in the UN High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation, and adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2009. FAO has provided its own operational definition, which defines SSC as 'mutual sharing and exchange of key development solutions – knowledge, experiences and good practices, policies, technology, and resources – between and among countries in the global South'.

[4] FAO's own operational definition of TrC is 'TrC involves two or more countries of the global South in collaboration with a third party, typically a multilateral institution, traditional resource partner, or emerging economy, facilitating SSC through the provision of technical or financial resources.'

[5] Since the official reference to the term 'South-South and triangular cooperation' on '*The state of South-South cooperation report of the Secretary-General*' in the General Assembly of 2003.

[6] The Buenos Aires Plan of Action provides a detailed blueprint for major changes in approaches to development assistance as well as practical guide for achieving objectives of TCDC.

[7] The decision was adopted in High-level Committee at its thirteenth session in May 2003 (decision 13/2) and endorsed by UNGA in 2004. Since then, the terminology has also changed, shifting from TCDC to SSC.

Committee in 2012 with its mandate to promote, coordinate and support SSTC globally and within the UN system.

9.   In parallel to SSC, the notion of TrC emerged in the 1990s with the growing reference in UN documents to the role of developed countries in the promotion of cooperation among developing countries. The term 'triangular cooperation' was used in the High-level Committee Report in 1995 (UN, 1995) for the first time to encourage the broadening of the international support on SSC with financial assistance from traditional donor agencies and countries[8], it was better explained in the New Direction of the Strategy for TCDC (FAO, 2014). TrC has been playing an expanding role since then and considered as a useful vehicle for donor countries to support SSTC programmes.

10.   The increasing power of SSC was recognized in the recent decades and UN has been urging the scaled-up efforts to strengthen SSC through a series of key conferences and publication of guiding policy documents, such as the Nairobi outcome document, adopted in the 2009 High-level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation, which still serves as a global policy framework for SSC, Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, adopted in 2015. These documents explicitly mention SSC as an important element of international cooperation for development to complement traditional North-South cooperation (UN, 2015, p. 28).

11.   In the context of 2030 Agenda, notably, the role of SSTC is emphasized as means of implementation to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 17, targets 17.6[9] and 17.9,[10] through enhancing international cooperation on the areas of science, technology, innovation and capacity building (UNGA, 2015). SSTC was further recognized as a critical driver for attaining the objectives of Agenda 2030 at the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA +40) held in 2019 (UNGA, 2019).

12.   The new context has motivated the new United Nations system-wide strategy on SSTC for sustainable development, 2020–2024, which aims to "provide a system-wide policy orientation to United Nations entities in order to galvanize a coordinated and coherent approach to policy, programmatic and partnership support on South-South and triangular cooperation and increase impact across United Nations activities at all levels: national, regional and global."

2.2   Evolution of South-South and triangular cooperation in FAO

13.   SSC in FAO dates to 1979, with the establishment of a focal point to promote technical cooperation among developing countries. Starting in 1994, FAO launched a series of partnership programmes, which focus on exchanging experts for technical cooperation among developing countries and technical cooperation among countries in transition (TCDC/TCCT). FAO's involvement became more prominent from 1996 onward, with the endorsement of the Special

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[8] Those who belong to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

[9] Target 17.6 "Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation in regional and international contexts and access to science, technology and innovation and improve knowledge sharing on mutually agreed conditions, including through greater coordination between existing mechanisms, notably at the level of the United Nations, and through a global facilitation mechanism for technology".

[10] Target 17.9 'enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation'.

Programme for Food Security (SPFS) by the World Food Summit (the programme finished in 2012).[11]

14.   In 2011, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the UN conducted a system-wide review of the existing UN arrangements in support of SSTC and found that the UN System had made little progress in promoting SSTC since 1978, concerning triangular cooperation. In summary, it recommended that "the institutional arrangements be improved in terms of overall system-wide policy frameworks, governance, coordination, structures, mechanisms, and dedicated resources, and that more effort be made to enhance its contribution to South-South cooperation" (JIU, 2011).

15.   To address this recommendation, FAO established a specific SSC Unit in 2012,[12] and designed its corporate strategy in 2013 (FAO, 2016). This strategy established key drivers and pillars of SSC for FAO and defined FAO's role as a broker of SSC. The key drivers that shaped the strategy included i) a widening scope of the set of modalities for SSC; ii) a flexible approach; iii) mainstreaming SSC into the FAO strategic framework; iv) field orientation in line with the Organization's decentralization process; v) harmonizing the SSC approach across FAO; vi) increasing resource mobilization for SSC; and vii) raising global relevance and local impact. The pillars of the 2013 SSC strategy are the following: i) exchange and uptake of Southern development solutions (downstream); ii) platforms for SSC knowledge networking (midstream); and iii) upstream policy support for effective SSC.

16.   During this period, in addition to establishing a specific team[13] to facilitate SSC initiatives at headquarters under the former Partnerships, Advocacy, and Capacity Development Division (DPS),[14] FAO out-posted SSC officers or focal points to promote the implementation of the strategy in the five regions.[15]

17.   In 2019, to demonstrate FAO's increased attention to SSC and ensure the adequate resources for the expansion of SSTC work, the SSC Unit became a separate office, i.e., the Office of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (OSS) directly reporting to the Office of the Assistant Director-General (ADG-PS) (FAO, 2018).

18.   In July 2020, OSS became a division under the Partnerships and Outreach Stream, i.e. South-South and Triangular Cooperation Division (PST).[16] There are expectations that this will further mainstream the use of the mechanism within the Organization, foster collaboration on SSTC within and matchmaking outside of FAO, and further facilitate the connection of Southern actors to the high-level fora/dialogue.[17] Further to this restructuring, FAO's SSTC strategy is being revised to address the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the BAPA +40, among other external and internal changes.

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[11] The SPFS was launched in 1994 but only endorsed in 1996.

[12] Former South-South Cooperation and Resource Mobilization Division (TCS) under the Technical Cooperation Department (TC).

[13] The SSC team was moved from TC to DPS at the end of 2016.

[14] In 2017 it was renamed the Partnerships and South-South Cooperation Division (DPS).

[15] Decentralization completed in 2014. In REU and RAF, it takes until 2017 for SSC staff posts to be filled. A consultant in each region acted as SSC focal points before the staff posts. In RAP and RNE, Policy Officers (while performing others functions in addition to SSTC) still act as SSC focal points as of now. In terms of reporting. All SSC officers/focal points report to their Regional Offices, not to PST.

[16] Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020–2021, approved by the FAO Council at its 164th session.

[17] Hereinafter FAO SSTC Institutional Structure refers to all SSTC teams, divisions departments that have existed throughout the years, i.e., from SSC Unit to PST.

2.3 Collaboration with Rome-based agencies

19. The first official Rome-based agencies (RBA) collaboration in SSTC happened in 2016 in the context of the Global South-South Development Expo (GSSD Expo), where the three agencies presented a joint panel showcasing evidence-based successful initiatives; since then, a joint panel has been organized every year. FAO is a member of the SSTC task team of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG).

20. Since 2017, the RBAs have also been jointly celebrating the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation through the organization of a joint advocacy event. In 2017, the RBAs presented a joint roadmap towards BAPA+40 at the GSSD Expo. The document, titled "Strengthening collaboration among Rome-based Agencies on South-South and Triangular Cooperation", introduced a vision for collaboration in, and through, SSTC. In 2019, the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation theme was "leaving no one behind in achieving SDG2: opportunities for the RBAs to broker South-South Cooperation after BAPA+40". In 2020, the theme was "the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in the transformation of food systems, in view of COVID-19".

2.4 The role of South-South and triangular cooperation in FAO

21. Over the years, FAO has played different roles and established partnerships with national governments through large/medium-size SSTC trust funds and programmes to mobilize development solutions through financial and in-kind resources and has helped enabling matchmaking among partners that are interested in providing, adapting and/or upscaling them.

22. Between 2012 and 2020, FAO has established or sustained relevant SSTC trust funds (e.g. FAO-China Trust Fund Phase II [followed by Phase III[18]] and the FAO-Morocco Trust Fund[19]); and signed 17 memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with partners interested in offering technical and/or in-kind solutions.[20]

23. FAO also considers SSTC to implement the 2030 Agenda, and as a key lever of the Organization's comparative advantage to upscale successful policies, practices, and programmes. To achieve this, FAO has facilitated the design and directly implemented SSTC projects/project components[21] worldwide on a variety of areas that contribute to SDG achievements. The implementation is mainly through its decentralized offices and in collaboration with technical departments,[22] though in some instances implementation is carried out by headquarters for global projects.

24. Furthermore, SSC, along with resources mobilization, was included as a functional objective in FAO's strategic framework since 2014 (FAO, 2013). In the most recent medium-term plan (MTP) 2022–2025, it was recognized that SSTC will serve as a key delivery mechanism of the new strategic framework and integral part of the move towards a reinvigorated business model.

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[18] China pledged a USD 50 million contribution for Phase I, another USD 50 million for Phase II and another USD 50 million to phase III.

[19] A minimum amount of USD 1 million during 2014–2020.

[20] There were previous SSTC initiatives facilitated by FAO before 2012.

[21] During the project formulation, projects with SSTC modalities can be flagged. In this way SSC officers (at headquarters and in regional offices) could be alerted at an early stage to ensure the support.

[22] Including the collaboration with FAO Strategic Programme teams and technical divisions.

2.5 Theory of change

25.   The evaluation team drafted a theory of change (TOC) based on a desk review of key documents, and scoping interviews with staff at headquarters and regional offices. The TOC outlines the main causal relationships and pathways of change related to FAO's work on SSTC. It does not aim to capture the full complexity of SSTC work, but rather presents potential pathways for FAO-brokered SSTC contributions to development results.

26.   The TOC is developed with the assumption that the goal of FAO's SSTC is to contribute to better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life in the Global South.

27.   To achieve this goal, the organization aims at the following two outcome-level objectives:[23] i) evidence-based southern solutions adapted and upscaled to tackle common development problems in the food and agriculture sector in the Global South; and ii) transformative public policies in the food and agriculture sectors developed, improved, and implemented in the Global South through an enabling environment for SSTC.

28.   At the output-level,[24] the TOC highlights the role of institutional collaboration, partnerships, knowledge sharing, policy dialogue and capacity development. At the input/activity-level, the TOC also notes that external factors (financial support) may affect FAO SSTC continuity and effectiveness and that the FAO SSTC "model" relies on having an internal enabling environment (human and financial resources, policies, capacity incentives and institutional mechanisms to support effective SSTC mainstreaming) and functional capacities within both FAO and countries for management, coordination, mainstreaming, partnerships, communication, outreach and advocacy on SSTC.

29.   Below is a non-exhaustive list of assumptions for the achievement of outputs and outcomes:

  i.   For activities to lead to outputs, the following needs to happen:
  - FAO provides clear guidance[25] and capacity development for effective SSTC initiatives;
  - SSTC initiatives are relevant to the countries/partners context (development and humanitarian): and
  - appropriate budgetary and financial resources available for follow-up to SSTC.

  ii.   For outputs to lead to outcomes, the following needs to happen:
  - institutional capacities, policies and strategies are conducive and sustainable at country level;
  - political leadership and non-governmental actors see the added value of SSTC; and
  - new knowledge promotes behavior changes and feedback is used for new generation of better SSTC activities.

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[23] FAO sphere of influence.

[24] FAO sphere of control.

[25] Guidance here refers to strategic/programmatic guidance provided through SSTC strategy, and operational guidance provided through accompanying guiding materials.

3. Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

30. Driven by rising country demands, FAO's engagement in SSTC has grown steadily since the establishment of a SSC focal point in 1979. It is critical to assess how SSTC in FAO has adapted to the current and future development contexts. Furthermore, there has not been a comprehensive evaluation of FAO's work on SSTC since its inception, although SSTC has been featured in several evaluations.

31. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide accountability to FAO Member Nations on the contribution of SSTC facilitated by FAO, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's work in promoting the mechanism among members. This evaluation will generate lessons learnt and provide forward-looking recommendations to guide and inform the subsequent programming.

32. Within this purpose, three main objectives are:

    i.   Assess the use of FAO SSTC modality and its contribution to development results in countries within the evolving context (economically, environmentally, politically, and socially).
    ii. Examine appropriateness of SSTC mechanisms and institutional arrangements in the Organization for effective SSTC, including its mainstreaming across FAO's work. In doing so, the evaluation will also look at the functional capacity to support SSTC within the organization.
    iii. Identify good practices, lessons learned and provide recommendations for improving the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and the four different types of sustainability of FAO's work in SSTC that can feed into the forward looking SSTC model.

3.1 Evaluation scope

33. It will examine the Organization's contribution to promoting an innovative and sustainable SSTC model among internal stakeholders including technical, partnership and resource mobilization units within the organization, and external stakeholders including national governments, academia, civil society organizations, the private sector, inter-governmental organizations, and grass-root organizations at global, regional and national levels from 2012 to 2021. Geographically, it covers the SSTC activities in all five regions,[26] i.e. Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East and North Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia.

34. To examine FAO's contribution, the evaluation will assess the extent to which the expected results[27] at outputs and outcomes: i) evidence-based southern solutions adapted and up-scaled to tackle common development problems in the food and agriculture sector in the Global South and ii) transformative public policies in the agriculture and food systems sectors are developed, improved, and implemented in the Global South through an enabling environment for SSTC, were achieved. It will analyse the "enabling environment" including partnerships, policies, innovation, sustainability, funding, institutional arrangements and support mechanisms established to address a range of development challenges, within the FAO mandate.

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[26] Countries selected are Algeria, Azerbaijan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Belize, Guatemala and Colombia.
[27] The evaluation would also examine unexpected results.

35.   To this end, the evaluation will examine the functional model of SSTC in the context of FAO mandate, current strategic framework and the new strategic framework/Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), governance, resources[28] and identify challenges that hinder the efficient function of the model. Furthermore, the evaluation will provide recommendations on the Organization's strategic direction which will allow it to move towards achieving 2030 agenda. The main audience of the evaluation are FAO Member Nations, donors and FAO's management. Primary users of this assessment are the units at headquarters and in decentralized offices responsible for SSTC programmes and activities, and the external stakeholders at global, regional and country levels.

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[28] Human and financial resources under Regular Programme and Extra-budgetary funding.

4.   Evaluation questions

36.   The evaluation's overarching question is developed based on the above context and the scope: What contribution has FAO's work in SSTC made to agricultural and rural development and food security since 2012 and in the SDGs era[29] in all the five regional offices?

37.   Specific evaluation questions:

   i.   How relevant and coherent are the FAO SSTC strategy and interventions for stakeholders at country, regional and global level?

   - How has been the implementation of the SSTC and how has this varied across regions and contexts?

   ii.   To what extent has FAO contributed to achieving results at national, (sub) regional and global level through various forms of SSTC?

   - What changes should be made to SSTC in FAO to maximise its contribution to the Global South?

   iii.   To what extent are results achieved at national, (sub) regional and global level through various forms of SSTC sustainable *(economically, environmentally, politically, and socially)*?

   iv.   To what extent has FAO enabled conditions for SSTC initiatives embedded in the Organization's ways of working, to improve, support and scale-up results?

   v.   To what extent have cross-cutting issues[30] been integrated in SSTC programming design and implementation?

38.   For each question, a set of sub-questions will guide data collection and analysis. Table 1 below presents a preliminary list of sub-questions, which will be further elaborated in the evaluation matrix, in collaboration with the external experts that will be recruited to compose the evaluation team.

Table 1. Evaluation subquestions formulated around the evaluation criteria

EQ 1. How relevant and coherent are the FAO SSTC strategy and interventions for stakeholders at country, regional and global level?

Relevance:
   i.   How has been the design of the SSTC interventions and how has this varied across regions and contexts?
   ii. How has CPFs supported the planning and implementation of SSTC in countries?
   iii. Has FAO played a role in assisting countries to address their developmental and humanitarian challenges through SSTC?
   iv. To what extent is the FAO's SSC work aligned with the needs, priorities and trends expressed in national development plans, both in development and humanitarian settings/contexts?
How it is responding and adapting to emergencies – COVID-19, climate change, etc.?
   i.   To what extent is it a relevant response mechanism to those needs (built upon on its comparative advantages and value added?)
   ii. To what extent are the SSTC strategy pillars and priorities relevant to current and new FAO's strategic framework, CFS, RI, and SDGs?
   iii. What institutional mechanisms are instituted for the identification of such solutions across the work streams of FAO?

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[29] Acknowledging that SDGs came into force with effect from 1 January 2016, the evaluation would cover FAO's contributions from 2012.

[30] The current FAO strategic framework cross-cutting issues are climate change, gender, governance and nutrition, Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, while the new strategic framework 2022–2031 cross-cutting issues are gender, youth and inclusion.

iv. How are these solutions defined and disseminated?

v. To what extent are the SSTC interventions aligned with the FAO SSTC strategy priorities?

vi. To what extent has FAO SSTC strategy built upon on its comparative advantages and value added?

vii. To what extent the implementation of SSTC is contributing to better positioning of the FAO at country, (sub) regional and global level? Are Southern solutions influencing FAO's collaborations with other UN entities? How does FAO respond to SSC policy directives via UN interagency channels?

Coherence:

i. To what extent has SSTC been integrated into FAO's programmes coherently (*the compatibility/synergies/interlinkages of the SSTC interventions with FAO's other interventions)*?

ii. To what extent has FAO SSTC programming and strategic documents been aligned with UN-SSTC norms, principles, and guidelines?

iii. To what extent, has FAO SSTC work contributed to joint initiatives with RBAs?

EQ 2. To what extent has FAO contributed to achieving sustainable results at national, (sub) regional and global level through various forms of SSTC?

Effectiveness:

Outcome level[31]

i. How has been the implementation of the SSTC and how has this varied across regions and contexts?

ii. To what extent has FAO-supported SSTC initiatives contributed to the achievement of FAO's strategic objectives and results (strategic framework) and to Sustainable Development Goals, with reference to SDG 17?

iii. To what extent FAO's support to SSTC contributed to the adaptation and/or upscaling of evidence-based southern solutions that tackle common development problems in the food and agriculture sector in the Global South?

iv. To what extent FAO's support to SSTC contributed to the development, improvement and implementation of policies that transform the agriculture and food systems in the Global South?

v. To what extent has FAO's support to foster an enabling environment for SSTC in the Global South contributed to results?

Output level

i. How has implementation of the SSTC interventions varied across regions and contexts?

ii. To what extent SSTC increased and diversified partnerships base (formal or informal)?

iii. Extent to which the SSTC-related work of FAO facilitated learning and uptake of innovative practices?

iv. To what extent SSTC initiatives have contributed to the Country Programme Frameworks (CPFs)' objectives, regional initiatives, and priorities?

v. To what extent have FAO's specific approaches and contributions been found to add value to the overall SSC/TC process, and what learning arises from this for the Organization's future investments?

vi. To what extent, has FAO support enhanced the external awareness of SSTC initiatives through communication, advocacy, and outreach activities?

vii. To what extent has FAO-supported SSTC initiatives contributed to opportunities emerging in the different SSTC partnerships for both providers, recipients and FAO?

viii. What are the main difficulties and challenges affecting the FAO efforts in successfully promoting and implementing SSTC at (sub) regional and country level?

EQ 3. To what extent are results at national, (sub) regional and global level through various forms of SSTC sustainable (economically, environmentally, politically, and socially)?

Sustainability:

i. To what extent have South-South cooperation initiatives facilitated by FAO been owned and embedded into national development results, processes and structures and demonstrate a potential for sustainability (economically, environmentally, politically, and socially)?

ii. The evaluation team will look at the issues of replicability, scalability, and synergies.

EQ 4. To what extent has FAO enabled conditions for SSTC initiatives embedded in the Organization's ways of working, to improve, support and scale-up results?

Efficiency:

i. To what extent has FAO provided a clear conceptual framework through SSTC strategy?

ii. How the operational and programming guidance and tools provided by FAO supported SSTC?

iii. To what extent have planning, monitoring, and reporting arrangements for SSC been conducive to achieving the SSTC objectives?

iv. To what extent has FAO's knowledge sharing/learning architecture of the SSTC been appropriate?

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[31] This includes the unforeseen results

v.	To what extent has FAO's institutional structure of the SSTC (at headquarters, regional and country level) been appropriate?
vi.	To what extent does the FAO SSTC strategy provide strategic guidance to FAO's Units and orients FAO's work?
vii.	To what extent, has FAO provided internal capacity development to support SSTC on mainstreaming in the Organization's work?
viii.	To what extent has FAO cooperated with other international organizations, emerging donors, and private sector through/for SSTC?
ix.	What are the challenges facing FAO's ability to progress and its functioning for better SSTC facilitation across FAO's programmes at country, regional and global level?

EQ 5. To what extent have cross-cutting issues[32] been integrated in SSTC programming design and implementation?

Cross cutting issues:

i.	To what extent have cross-cutting issues in the current SF – climate change, gender, governance, and nutrition been considered and integrated into FAO's SSTC programming and SSTC interventions' design and implementation?
ii.	To what extent have cross-cutting issues in the new SF 2022–2031 – gender, youth and inclusion are integrated into FAO's SSTC new strategic framework? To what extent has FAO included consideration of nutrition and climate change issues in the SSTC programming and SSTC interventions' design and implementation?

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[32] Under the current FAO strategic framework, the cross-cutting issues are climate change, gender, governance and nutrition, Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, while for the new strategic framework 2022–2031 the cross-cutting issues are gender, youth and inclusion.

5. Methodology

39.   The evaluation will adhere to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (UNEG, 2016), the Ethical Guidelines (UNEG, 2008), the "do no harm" principle and will incorporate the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria in the evaluation questions. A participatory and collaborative approach will be adopted to promote the utilization of evaluation findings and recommendations. The approach will ensure transparency and inclusion during the whole evaluation process.

40.   The evaluation will reply on multiple sources of primary and secondary data for data collection, and use mixed methods approach for data analysis, triangulation and validation.

41.   To assess the contribution of FAO SSTC's work to development results, the evaluation team will conduct stakeholder mapping exercise to identify key internal, external, and potential actors, an in-depth desk review gathering the evidence from the synthesis of past evaluations, programme achievement reports and country annual reports (which have a dedicated section to report SSTC activities). This will be complemented by country case studies[33] and in-depth interviews conducted with a broad range of internal and external stakeholders, which will also triangulate part of the evidence gathered. Surveys of national counterparts should inform the relevance and sustainability of SSTC activities at the country level.

42.   To examine the SSTC model and mechanisms, the evaluation team will undertake in-depth interviews and survey both internal staff and external partners to understand if SSTC processes and mechanisms are set in an efficient and effective manner. FAO SSTC's operational and programming guidelines, tools will be analysed, in addition to country case studies, which will inform the evaluation team the practical operation in the countries, issues and challenges faced.

43.   To understand if FAO has the enabling conditions (institutional arrangements, human and financial resources, staff skills, databases), the evaluation team will make use of a benchmarking analysis to compare institutional arrangements and governance structure of SSTC in FAO against best practices in a sample of other UN agencies with strong presence in SSTC (such as UNDP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], the World Food Programme [WFP], the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], etc.). FAO corporate and strategic documents will also be reviewed to identify changes in governance structure, and positioning of SSTC in the organization.

44.   To specifically answer the question on gender equality and other cross-cutting themes,[34] the evaluation team will take advantage of portfolio analysis to analyse the percentage of SSTC projects that incorporated gender, climate change and nutrition and governance considerations. This will be complemented by in-depth desk review of sampled projects (project documents, progress and terminal reports) and semi-structured interviews with FAO personnel and partners.

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[33] The selection criteria included: i) number of SSTC projects and type of projects (country/regional/global; SSC/TrC); ii) countries from different regions/sub-regions; iii) countries from different income classification; iv) range of thematic areas; v) countries covering major and emerging SSTC providers; vi) countries covering different implementing modalities and funding modalities (cofounding/self-funding/funding from the provider); and vii) logistical issues and security concerns.

[34] Under the current FAO strategic framework, the cross-cutting issues are climate change, gender, governance and nutrition, Indigenous Peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, while for the new strategic framework 2022–2031 the cross-cutting issues are gender, youth and inclusion.

45.   Evidence will be obtained from the below data sources:

Box 1. Description of data sources and methods

Desk review: a comprehensive review of documents will be undertaken during the evaluation, including reviewing of FAO corporate documents (MTPs), SSTC strategy, operational guidelines, 2019 strategic internal review, SDG 2 case study on SSTC, strategic programme reviews/reports (e.g., Brazil, China), country annual reports, UN policy background documents, relevant evaluation reports, sample of SSTC project documents and technical reports. This analysis will be conducted to identify all SSTC projects and projects with SSTC components. Using a database downloaded from the Field Project Management Information System (FPMIS), the analysis will provide an overview of SSTC in terms of budget allocation, geographical coverage, themes and modalities, while highlighting salient characteristics of SSTC activities in different regions. This will provide information on context, relevance, process, achievements, as well as providing insights into lessons learned.

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions: Zoom, Skype, call etc. Interviews will be conducted with FAO staff at headquarters and regional offices, sub-regional coordinators in additional to a sample of FAO Representatives. The evaluation will also conduct interviews with external stakeholders at global, country, and regional levels, including a sample of Member Nations' permanent representatives, government officials (including National Programme Coordinators), UN agencies, development partners, academia, civil society and the private sector in selected countries (see also country case studies).

Synthesis of past evaluations: the evaluation will review relevant thematic, country programme and project evaluations completed between 2012 and 2021 to gather and synthesize evidence reported on achievements and issues of SSTC. This secondary data will help in triangulating evidence found through other methods and from different data sources. It will include the Morocco country programme evaluation (CPE), the Mexico CPE and the project evaluation of 'Meso-America sin Hambre.'

Surveys: the evaluation will design and implement online surveys to gather information from FAO Member Nations. The evaluation team will undertake one internal survey, which is open to all FAO personnel, to understand internal perceptions and awareness on SSTC. Another survey will target government counterparts to understand the incentives, and deterrents of participation and contribution to SSTC, challenges at the country level and the future opportunities in using SSTC as a modality. The initial exploratory interviews during the preparatory phase will enable the design of survey tools.

Benchmarking study: the evaluation team plans to conduct a specific study to assess FAO's governance structure and institutional arrangements on SSTC, in comparison to a sample of relevant UN organizations, to extract learning and good practices. The study will consist of document reviews, including syntheses of SSTC policy/strategy, syntheses of SSTC evaluations and interviews of key SSTC focal points in the selected UN agencies.

Country case studies: with the COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainty of travel, and in full compliance with the "do no harm" principle, if the country-specific COVID-19 protocol permits, the evaluation will look at recruiting national consultants primarily to get an in-depth understanding of achievements and sustainable impact of SSTC at the country level in addition to best practices, enabling and hindering factors, and lessons learned. This includes a review of project documents, interviews will be held with the FAO country team, other relevant partners (government, donors, UN agencies and multilateral development banks). The tentative selected countries are Algeria, Azerbaijan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Mongolia, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Brazil, based on the below selection criteria:

  i.   number of SSTC projects and type of projects;
  ii.   countries from different regions/sub-regions;
  iii.   countries from different income classification;
  iv.   range of thematic areas;
  v.   countries covering major and emerging SSTC providers;
  vi.   countries covering different implementing modalities and funding modalities; and
  vii.   logistical issues and security concerns.

6. Management arrangements

46.   In line with the OED policy, the Office will conduct the evaluation and has the overall responsibility for conceptualizing and designing the evaluation, managing the evaluation process, and producing the final evaluation report for presentation of the report to the Programme Committee.

47.   OED will select, hire and lead an evaluation team composed of FAO evaluators and external consultants with thematic and regional expertise. The evaluation team will interview and survey FAO personnel and partners (including governments, resource partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other agencies) involved in SSTC work, at headquarters and in regional offices.

48.   Internal Contact Group: composed of PST, the Resource Mobilization and Private Sector Partnerships Division (PSR), the Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division (PSU), the Office for Project Services (OSP) and the regional SSC focal points. Their main task will be to review key documents (TORs, reports, etc.). The contact group will be responsible for preparing the draft management response under the coordination of the DDG-Partnership and Outreach Stream.

49.   The OED team: Arwa Khalid, Evaluation Manager; Wenxin Zhang, Evaluation Consultant; and Sarah Jaff, Administrative Assistant.

50.   The team of external consultants: it will be composed of regional and thematic experts specialized in SSTC and evaluations; among which the core team includes i) a senior SSTC expert; ii) a partnership expert; and iii) a senior evaluator.

7. Evaluation timeline

Table 2. Evaluation deliverables and timeline

Deliverables	Time
Draft concept note	April–May 2021
Final draft concept note for circulation	30 May 2021
Desk review	March–15 May 2021
Team recruitment	June 2021
Final draft TOR for circulation	5 September 2021
Virtual team building exercise and meetings, Rome	mid-July 2021
Main evaluation missions - country case studies	September 2021–February 2022
Draft report prepared and circulated to OED	April 2022
Final report prepared and circulated to evaluand for comments	May 2022
Stakeholder workshop, finalization of the report and management response	May 2022
Final report prepared	June 2022
Submission and presentation to Programme Committee	November 2022

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