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Evaluation of FAO's strategic results framework

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Thematic evaluation series

Evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADG	Assistant Director-General
AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
BDTF	Business Development Task Force
COA	Corporate Outcome Assessments
CPF	Country Programming Frameworks
CPMB	Corporate Programmes Monitoring Board
DDG-P	Deputy Director-General Programmes
DPI	FAO Investment Centre
ERP	Electronic resource planning
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAOR	FAO Representatives
FPMIS	Field Project Management Information System
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information technology
JIU	Joint Investigation Unit
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
NSHR	Non-staff human resources
OED	Office of Evaluation
OHR	Office of Human Resources
OIG	Office of the Inspector-General
OSD	Office of Supper to Decentralized
OSP	Office of Strategy, Planning and Resources Management
PIMB	Programme Implementation Monitoring Board
PIRES	Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support System
PSR	FAO Business Development and Resource Mobilization
SO	Strategic Objectives
SP	Strategic Programme
SSC	Shared Services Centre
UNCCA	United Nations Common Country Assessments
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNLOCK	United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive summary

1. Designed in 2013, the Strategic Framework (FAO, 2013a) aimed to position the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) more strategically and to address the facts that the Organization's programmatic activities were defined along silo-like disciplinary lines and that corporate efforts were not clearly aligned with the country programme priorities agreed with Members. The conceptual rationale for the Strategic Framework was well suited to these goals and recent evaluations confirm the value of having Strategic Objectives (SOs) (FAO, n.d.) that capitalize on FAO's technical excellence to drive its engagement at country level and to achieve the interconnected Strategic Development Goals (SDGs). This evaluation reaffirms the Strategic Framework's significance in helping a 70-year-old culture to adapt to a dynamic external landscape, addresses emerging challenges and makes recommendations to further the Framework's relevance and effectiveness.

2. FAO has made commendable efforts to manage a substantial transformation of its organizational architecture to prepare it for an emerging landscape. Much has been achieved and FAO is now a far more decentralized and strategically oriented organization than it was eight years ago. The journey has been turbulent. FAO has adopted a "learning-by-doing" approach and fine-tuned its actions in light of experience and unforeseen developments. The structural and operational changes introduced in tandem with the Strategic Framework have promoted more multidisciplinary work across technical departments at headquarters level. Their contribution to transforming FAO's delivery effectiveness in the field is still a work in progress, owing to the complexity of undertaking such change within the confines of a fixed financial-resource envelope. Overall, what has been achieved is useful. The conceptual rationale of the Strategic Framework is valid, but needs to be advanced to prepare the Organization for the next level of transformation required by the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform agenda.

3. FAO also needs to position itself and adapt its delivery model to the evolution and development progress of several countries, especially the graduation of low-income countries and the increase in national capacities. The changing nature of development assistance and technical support have also evolved and, indeed, call for a rethinking of FAO's offering as a knowledge and technical organization. With new leadership at the top, FAO has an opportunity to fast-track its transformation by resolutely addressing the outstanding issues identified in this report and preparing the ground for FAO to embrace a new organizational culture that is strategically oriented and focused on expertise-based engagement and agile implementation.

Readiness for the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform

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

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

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

Appropriateness of the Results Framework

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

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

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

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

Effectiveness of management arrangements

11. The management model that was developed to make FAO more strategic and country-oriented was generally appropriate, but owing to implementation shortcomings, did not fully achieve its goals. The matrix-type structure was suited to fostering cross-sectoral thinking and led to more interdisciplinary work at headquarters. However, it did not have the expected positive effects on FAO country programmes, in particular, as the matrix did not percolate down to decentralized levels of delivery. Management reshuffles were primarily at the headquarters and regional levels, with the creation of Strategic Programme (SP) teams, dedicated to promoting programmatic work. The investment in SPs at Regional Office level was too limited to enable them to focus on their intended programmatic

leadership and guidance role and delivery support. With this limitation, and as Sub-Regional and Country Offices did not have a defined role in the delivery structure, the Strategic Framework only marginally changed the way that FAO operated at country level. This is a concern, as FAO's performance is primarily measured at this level, and this is where the Strategic Framework was supposed to make a difference.

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

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

Adequacy of human-resource profiles

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

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

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

Effectiveness of programmatic approaches

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

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

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

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

Effectiveness of monitoring and learning

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

enhance programme performance and results effectiveness. There is a need for stronger structures and processes for strategic and qualitative programme monitoring and review of organizational performance and development contributions.

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

Adequacy of change management

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

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

Effectiveness of the administrative environment

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

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

27. **The evaluation recommends improving the efficiency of administrative procedures to increase FAO's agility in responding to country needs, by increasing delegation of authority to decentralized offices, while establishing the appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure the sound management of risks.**

1.   Introduction

1.   The 125th Session of the FAO Programme Committee called for an evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework "to assess the efficiency of the Results Framework, to assess its effectiveness in supporting the results-based management of FAO's programme of work as an accountability tool and to identify lessons that can inform the formulation of FAO's next Strategic Results Framework in 2020" (FAO, 2018a, para. 10). In the following session of March 2019, the Programme Committee said the evaluation should examine the following aspects:

- The adequacy of the matrix management structure
- The effectiveness of institutional, administrative and operational procedures
- The appropriateness of planning, monitoring and reporting systems
- The quality of the Results Framework
- The appropriateness of indicators to capture development effectiveness
- The appropriateness of the outcome assessment methodology

2.   This evaluation is the last in a series: each of the SOs was evaluated between 2016 and 2018 and recently complemented by a synthesis review (FAO 2016; 2017a; 2017b; 2018b; 2018c; 2019a). Generally, the SO evaluations and synthesis report established that the Revised Strategic Framework had enabled FAO to adopt a new way of working that was more focused on development outcomes and that the SOs had introduced interdisciplinary approaches to FAO's work – a significant and positive shift.

3.   Because of its scope, the synthesis report could not assess in detail a number of issues raised in the SO evaluations, as they did not originate from the design of the Strategic Results Framework itself, but from other important areas and developments, most notably, amendments to FAO's organizational structure due to the matrix system and decentralization, budgetary austerity measures, internal controls and the enabling environment in which the Strategic Framework had to be delivered. Consequently, the focus of this evaluation is on operationalization issues, specifically, those mentioned in the Programme Committee meeting report (FAO, 2018a).[1]

1.1   Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

4.   The evaluation examined how operational and management arrangements, cutting across all SOs, effectively and efficiently supported the implementation of the vision presented in 2013 (FAO, 2013a). Looking back on around six years of implementation and focusing on FAO's delivery, from country to headquarters level, the evaluation assessed the suitability of the Strategic Framework's implementation arrangements to delivering the Organization's normative and development missions against focused programmatic priorities.

5.   Ultimately, the evaluation aimed to draw lessons that would enhance FAO's mission delivery, taking into account the opportunities and challenges fashioned by the significant changes in the global development agenda since 2013. With a new Strategic Framework being formulated, this historical analysis offers FAO's Management and Governing Bodies a basis for reflection.

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[1] The terms "Strategic Results Framework" and "Strategic Framework" are interchangeable. The "Results Framework" is the Corporate Results Framework, FAO's key accountability document. The Programme Committee request pertained to the operational arrangements of the Strategic Framework, to attain the results set out in the Results Framework.

6.   Building on previous evaluations and taking into account the requests put forward by FAO's Governing Bodies, the evaluation aimed to address three questions:[2]

- To what extent is the Results Framework an appropriate structure for planning, delivering and reporting FAO results in the context of the 2030 Agenda and UN System Reform?
- In what way have FAO's programme and organizational structure and supporting system proved a suitable delivery architecture for FAO's strategic vision?
- How effectively and efficiently have FAO's administrative procedures and staff management supported the integrated delivery of FAO's missions?

1.2   Methodology

7.   The SO evaluations (FAO, 2016a; 2017a; 2017b; 2018b; 2018c) and synthesis report (FAO, 2019a) generally recognized the relevance of the programmatic vision underpinning the 2013 Strategic Framework, hence the focus of this evaluation on the delivery model, to assess whether and how its operationalization has supported the transformation of this vision into effective results. The evaluation developed a "theory of delivery", a visual representation of the various elements influencing delivery effectiveness. This facilitated the exchange of ideas with evaluation stakeholders and helped to frame evaluation inquiries into these elements.

8.   The evaluation focused on the FAO Strategic Framework's achievements in terms of implementation and any unintended outcomes compared with initial strategic intent and objectives, as well as on understanding the dynamic transformation pathways. Thus, it essentially relied more on qualitative information. The evaluation primarily sought to leverage the substantial amount of relevant information produced prior to and in 2019 by audits, evaluations, internal reviews, external studies (such as the 2017–2018 Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, or MOPAN, review) (MOPAN, 2019) and similar United Nations reviews. This analysis served to form an initial hypothesis, based on which the evaluators built their consultations with stakeholders in the field and at headquarters. Information was gathered through interviews with selected FAO staff in roles that warranted separate conversation, interviews with institutional partners or counterparts and group discussions in regionally focused workshops to gather complementary perspectives from Country, Sub-regional or Regional offices.

9.   To complement the qualitative inquiry, the evaluation surveyed all FAO Representations to collect the views of those stakeholders whose work should have been directly enhanced by the Strategic Framework. The survey was an opportunity to extend the evaluation inquiry to all Country Representatives who wished to share their views on the various elements examined by the evaluation and to capitalize on their hands-on experience. The high response rate (63 percent) allowed the gathering of quantitative information to complement the qualitative.

10.   The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) managed and led the evaluation, and independent consultants provided substantial contributions, providing inputs to the evaluation design and leading analysis in areas of inquiry defined at inception. All team members participated in relevant meetings and discussions and provided written contributions to the evaluation report.

11.   FAO Management was consulted at every stage of the evaluation – to define the scope and focus of the evaluation, to share information and documentation and to provide feedback

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[2] The evaluation's terms of reference (Annex 1) provide further details as to the evaluation questions.

on initial findings. The Evaluation Team consulted a large number of FAO stakeholders, purposely selected for their role and insights into the Strategic Framework. The extent of their engagement depended on their roles as they related to the main themes of the evaluation. Stakeholders included: (1) FAO senior managers and selected staff (with roles that made them relevant informants) in Country, Sub-regional or Regional Offices or at headquarters; (2) Permanent Representatives of FAO's Governing Bodies on the Programme Committee; and (3) partner institutions of FAO from the development sphere, public and private sectors.

1.3 Limitations

12. The evaluation was produced to a tight schedule, as required by the Programme Committee, dictated by the need for timely information on such a strategic topic to be presented to the newly elected Director-General. Consequently, the approach and methods used to gather information were adapted to the time constraints, for example, by organizing collective workshop discussions rather than individual interviews. Conscious that yet another assessment (albeit the final one) in relation to the Strategic Framework carried a certain risk of "evaluation fatigue" among FAO staff, the Evaluation Team carefully considered each opportunity to engage with staff based on its added value.

2.   Findings

13.   The evaluation recognizes and reaffirms the findings of several previous evaluations – in particular, the five SO evaluations (FAO, 2016a; 2017a; 2017b; 2018b; 2018c), the 2017–2018 MOPAN assessment (MOPAN, 2019) and SO synthesis review (FAO, 2019a) – on the significance of the Strategic Framework as a transformative initiative that entailed major alterations to orientation, structures and organizational processes and changing a 70-year-old culture in order to adapt it to a dynamic external landscape and address emerging challenges.

14.   There has been general acceptance and endorsement of the Strategic Framework's conceptual soundness, in particular, by the SO evaluations and the 2017–2018 MOPAN review. The Strategic Framework introduced a new way of working at FAO, represented by: a conceptual framework with cross-sectoral interdisciplinary approaches to interconnected challenges to food security, nutrition, livelihoods, resilience, environmental and natural-resource sustainability; a matrix management structure interweaving programme delivery and technical expertise; a three-tiered (global, regional, country level) business delivery model; and a results framework with targets and indicators at output, outcome and objective level.

15.   The Strategic Results Framework also prompted FAO to gradually put in place a new structure to better understand and serve country needs, with a three-tier delivery mechanism linking FAO's work at national, regional and global levels to an integrated results framework. It also enhanced FAO's accountability to Members, with biennial reporting on outputs for which FAO was fully accountable and corporate outcomes to which FAO and its partners contributed. The Strategic Framework further led to a broadening of engagements with new ministries and an increase in FAO's partnerships in key areas.

16.   The deliberations around the Strategic Framework were instrumental in ensuring the centrality of food and agriculture in the 2030 Agenda and aided the formulation of SDG2 and interconnected SDGs.

17.   At the same time, the Strategic Results Framework was not a change at the margins, but a major transformation of how the Organization intended to deliver on its mission and account for results. The evaluation recognizes the complex transition implicit in the reform process, the constraints imposed by flat regular budget resources over the last four biennia and the challenges inherent to striking a balance between a global normative role and contributions to development results at the country level. FAO's commitment to the Strategic Framework has remained resolute despite the challenges of operationalization and the turbulence of the change process, compounded by the concomitance of two other major developments: decentralization (which saw a redistribution of technical capacity) and financial austerity (the flat regular budget envelope for the past eight years).

18.   Much progress has been made, although more needs to be done to better prepare the Organization for the major changes in the landscape, in particular, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the repositioning of the UN Development System (UNDS). With development progress in several countries (graduation from low-income status and an increase in national capacities), the nature of development assistance and technical support has evolved, too, and calls for a rethinking of FAO's offerings as a knowledge and technical organization.

19. With new leadership at the top, FAO has an opportunity to fast-track its transformation by resolutely addressing the outstanding issues identified in this report and preparing the ground for FAO to adopt a strategic orientation that has expertise-based engagement and agile implementation as its new organizational culture.

20. With the aforementioned general recognition and endorsement of the Strategic Framework's conceptual rationale, transformational progress and relevance for the future, the emphasis of this report is mainly on unresolved challenges and outstanding issues, which, if adequately addressed, could accelerate FAO's results effectiveness. The report's strict focus on these constraints is in no way intended to detract from the overall positive effects of the Strategic Framework on FAO.

21. This section presents an assessment of the operational arrangements established to implement the new vision, taking into account FAO's engagement in the 2030 Agenda and United Nations System reforms.

2.1 Suitability of programmatic and organizational structures and systems to delivering FAO's strategic vision

22. This section presents an assessment of the operational arrangements for implementing the new vision, considering FAO's engagement in the 2030 Agenda and United Nations System reforms.

23. There has been general acceptance and endorsement of the Strategic Framework's conceptual soundness, as acknowledged, in particular, by the SO evaluations and 2017–2018 MOPAN review. The latter contained positive observations on the usefulness of the Strategic Framework: "FAO has significantly refocused its strategy by shifting away from a largely technical focus towards five complex, ambitious, multidisciplinary challenges facing its partner countries [...] FAO has established a clear compelling and focused strategic vision that bodes well for the future [...] The Revised Strategic Framework has been instrumental in shaping the Organization and is driving significant change in the way FAO works" (MOPAN, 2019: 7–8).

24. The Strategic Framework architecture led to the creation of a matrix structure for delivery, with FAO's SP leads coordinating the implementation of the respective SOs and the actual delivery of tasks and activities entrusted to the various divisions. SO focal points were appointed in Regional and Sub-regional Offices to help Country Offices understand, adapt and implement the new architecture and to eventually report results in an aggregated and comparable way. Regional Initiatives and country programmes were progressively aligned with (and expected to report results against) the new SOs. The Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2018–2021, which took into account external developments (such as the SDGs) and lessons learned, did not lead to significant changes in the Strategic Framework architecture (FAO, 2017c).

25. The Strategic Results Framework also prompted FAO to gradually put in place a new structure to better understand and serve country needs, with a three-tier delivery mechanism linking FAO's work at national, regional and global levels to an integrated results framework. It also enhanced FAO's accountability to Members, with biennial reporting on outputs for which FAO was fully accountable and corporate outcomes to which FAO and partners contributed.

Effectiveness of the management structure

Finding 1:   The matrix management structure was suited to fostering a multidisciplinary approach. Major structural changes were implemented at headquarters and in Regional Offices, without any addition to overall headcount. However, the matrix structure did not percolate down to Sub-regional and Country Office level, so did not promote an alignment of corporate and country programmes. With a flat budget, SP focal points in the Regional Offices had multiple responsibilities and vast geographical coverage and could not discharge their strategic coordination roles, thus weakening the impact of the Strategic Framework at field level. Sub-regional Offices did not have a role in the matrix structure, despite being the first port of call for country-level technical support. Insufficient clarity on the central management roles of SP Teams in headquarters and Regional Offices compounded the lack of cohesion between corporate and decentralized delivery levels.

26.   While not explicitly stated in the Guidelines for the Implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework (FAO, 2019b), the matrix structure was designed to move away from programmatic orientations organized along disciplinary lines related to the mandates of the technical departments involved. The ultimate intent of having programmatic and multidisciplinary approaches was to have improved development outcomes at the country level, which harnessed the wealth of technical expertise in FAO, through country programmes clearly aligned with the needs of Members.

Box 1: What is matrix management?

> Organizations adopt matrix systems to help balance competing objectives and effectively manage interdependent activities. For FAO, these competing objectives are greater responsiveness to client needs on the one hand (country partner needs to achieve its SDG targets or the needs of stakeholders reliant on FAO's normative role) and technical excellence in operations, analytical work and advice on the other. These objectives are clearly stated in FAO's documentation. Successful matrix organizations continuously review their organizational effectiveness and re-adjust internal power imbalances as necessary to enhance their ability to achieve their strategic goals (for more, please see Gottlieb, 2007, and Galbraith, 2009).

27.   Matrix organizations are characterized by their managerial arrangements, in which managers have dual reporting lines and are accountable to two client managers. The purpose of such an arrangement is to enable better information sharing across disciplines or departments and to better match services to client needs. The managers of the respective units should have joint responsibility for objective setting, supervision of work, appraisals and employee development.

28.   Management literature suggested that a matrix approach was a sound way to synergistically address FAO's dual objectives of ensuring excellence in the delivery of technical advice, principally at the global level, and responding to Member demands through focused country programmes. Although interviews with FAO management revealed a diversity of views on the effectiveness of inter-divisional and inter-SP collaboration, they confirmed a general view that the Results Framework and matrix structure had engendered a rise in the amount of interdisciplinary work. This, in turn, led to better communication between technical and programme units and fostered more interdisciplinary work among technical units at headquarters. The synthesis report presented the significance of the overall cultural shift within FAO induced by the Strategic Framework (FAO, 2019a).

29.   It also noted that "technical work remains mostly sectoral, partly due to the way the Organization is still structured. Some noted that silos remained in some areas, while others

highlighted that some SPs may have become the new silos" (FAO, 2019a: para. 42). There have been good examples of cross-SP collaboration – such as the SP3–SP5 work on social protection and resilience and SP3–SP1 work on nutrition-sensitive social protection – which show that inter-connection across SPs is realistic. SP management teams also reported that their strategic guidance to Technical Units at the planning stage was sometimes hampered by differences in perspective or a lack of necessary expertise, which led SPs to implement programmes and deviate from their primary purpose.

30. Structural and operational arrangements to implement the matrix model focused mainly on the headquarters level, setting out responsibilities and working arrangements between SP management teams and Technical Units (through service-level agreements) and, with some variations, at the regional level (through SP focal points and Regional Initiative managers). Thus, the restructuring did not percolate down to the Sub-regional and Country Office structures, and the effectiveness of the matrix structure in combining various technical areas into more multidisciplinary approaches in headquarters did not materialize as clearly at country level.

31. Discussions with FAO staff from the decentralized offices[3] suggest that the role of the headquarters-based SP management teams is not well understood by the Country and Sub-regional Offices, who reported little to none of the interaction expected under the subsidiarity principle.[4] In the survey conducted for this evaluation,[5] however, Country Offices indicated that their collaboration with other units in FAO had increased, with positive effects on programme delivery. There is also evidence from the SO evaluations (FAO, 2016a; 2017a; 2017b; 2018b; 2018c) and synthesis report (FAO, 2019a: para. 44–48 and 74) that, in several instances, the SP teams' guidance fostered interdisciplinary work and better responses to country needs.

32. While the significant idiosyncrasies of SOs and SPs prevent the evaluation from making general statements about SPs, what can be noted is the broad perception that pairing SP5 with an operational team worked well, creating capacity that could be tapped for concrete action, leading to effective support for field programmes. There are other examples of successful management practices developed by SPs – some are presented in the SO-specific evaluation reports – but these are beyond the scope of this evaluation.

33. Consultations for this evaluation confirmed role-clarity issues already cited in the synthesis report in relation to programme implementation, resource mobilization and resource allocation (FAO, 2019a: para. 76–77). These suggest that the central function of the SP management teams, to improve FAO's footprint and positioning in countries through enhanced programme cohesion, had not been emphasized enough. Experience shows that the SPs were too heavily locked into operational verification tasks or side-tracked into managing programmes of their own. While SP management teams, as lead managers of the programmes, evidently require the contribution of technical staff, having technical experts in SP management teams fulfilling non-technical functions was an inefficient use of their skills. A clearer distinction between management, technical and operational functions may have enhanced the SP teams' effectiveness.

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[3] Here, the term refers to all levels, including Regional, Sub-regional and Country Offices.

[4] The subsidiarity principle implies that Country Offices' technical needs should first to be met by Sub-regional Offices and escalated to Regional Offices only if capacity at the Sub-regional level is insufficient and further escalated to headquarters if Regional Office capacity is insufficient or does not exist. Likewise, headquarters units are not expected to liaise directly with Country Offices (except on specific global programmes) and must operate through the Regional Office and Sub-regional Office structure.

[5] Appendix 1, in particular, the survey results for questions 6 and 8.

34.   In parallel to implementing the Strategic Framework, FAO was pursuing a vigorous decentralization process. In the revamped architecture, Regional Offices became the link between the corporate level and Country Offices, coordinating the delivery of technical and operational assistance to Country Offices. In the Regional Offices, the matrix structure involved institutionalizing the positions of Regional Programme Leaders (RPL), coordinating a team of SP focal points, as the main pivot points between Country Offices and SP teams in headquarters and Regional Initiative delivery managers. Survey responses confirm that SP teams in Regional Offices have facilitated more effective engagement between Country Offices and headquarters.[6]

35.   Still, these roles came on top of other responsibilities. Faced with unreasonable workloads, regional SP focal points have been unable to devote the kind of time envisaged in the matrix structure to their programmatic guidance and coordination roles (see Box 2). A significant view emerges from Country Offices that Regional Initiatives may have overshadowed the other functions of the Regional Offices in some locations. With inadequate capacity and resources to effectively support country programmes, Regional Offices have been perceived as a mere additional approval layer. The subsidiarity principle is seen by many as having severed the connection of countries to headquarters Technical Units without adding to delivery effectiveness at a time when Sub-Regional Offices had limited capacity.

36.   Sub-regional Offices, present in several regions, were intended to supplement Regional Offices as lead providers of technical expertise to country programmes, and de facto, they support numerous projects implemented in Country Offices. Despite the importance of this role as technical back-up for COs, it has not been reflected in the Strategic Framework's delivery structure, nor in corporate workplans. At the same time, their considerable variance in capacities determined the extent to which they could play a useful part in supporting impactful programmes in Country Offices. The recent evaluation of the Sub-regional Office for Mesoamerica, based in Panama, showed that the Sub-regional Office delivered effective and highly valued technical back-up to COs, thanks to having a mix of essential capacities, guided by clear programmatic orientations in line with priorities defined at the regional level. The Latin America region offers a valuable example of the complementary roles of Regional and Sub-regional Offices, with the appropriate leadership and set-up.

37.   Despite some positive examples, regional structures have, by and large, not been fully or systematically leveraged to connect Country Offices and support them in planning along new programmatic lines. Country Offices largely tagged their activities to the Strategic Framework somewhat haphazardly to fulfil corporate reporting requirements. To enable the Regional and Sub-regional Offices to articulate the Strategic Framework for their Country Offices, their roles, authority and responsibilities need to be clarified.

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[6] See Appendix 1, in particular, question 8

Box 2: Perspectives from an SP focal point in a Regional Office

Functions

- Budget holder of several projects with a combined budget of USD 25 million
- Concept-note reviewer/approver for every SP-relevant project in the region
- Coordinator of inputs into corporate monitoring, i.e. feeding country results data into PIRES
- Provider of consolidated updates on all SP-related matters in the region
- Provider of Lead Technical Officer support to all SP-relevant projects
- Liaison with relevant donors and partners (WFP, OCHA) and attending related workshops/meetings
- Early warning–early action focal point
- Ad hoc requests on a daily basis evolving from country/regional/headquarters including orientation of new staff, donor meetings, evaluations, project-cycle matters, etc.
- Support for emergency operations (10 emergencies in four months the previous year) and relevant events, as needed.

Overwhelming administrative bureaucracy vs. SP function

Rarely in the field, as often tied to the desk by administrative tasks. A USD 100 000 project and a USD 10 million project involve the same costs and amounts of time and paperwork. Is this pragmatic? Can we not reconcile procedures with project scale? For small projects, a simple concept note should suffice and only one key output should be agreed; a full results matrix is a disproportionate requirement for small budgets.

Human-resource mismatch with responsibilities and needs on the ground

SPs at headquarters seem better staffed, while at the regional level, all work is down to one or two people, without the full breadth of technical expertise: this is not an effective way to implement our strategic role. The regional office does not have, for instance, the capacity to respond effectively to the full scope of regional emergencies with current staff capacity (1.5 people), so needs significant support from headquarters.

38.   Meanwhile, FAO's role and mandate as one of the lead United Nations agencies on food and agriculture for the 2030 Agenda will place new demands on decentralized offices to step up their provision of national-level policy advice and capacity development, including monitoring and reporting on progress towards the SDGs. This will require greater levels of delegation, as decentralization, in the classical sense, involves the transfer of funds, functions and functionaries. In FAO's case, there has been greater effort to transfer functionaries (staff) than funds and functions. Across the regions, it is felt that there has not been any meaningful delegation of authority to the field, especially in operational matters. This was reaffirmed by the recent Internal Review of FAO's Regional Structures (FAO, 2019c), which noted that decentralized offices were only partly able to deliver on FAO's mandate. It noted that since the initial phases of decentralization, there has been a trend towards recentralized decision-making in the areas of budget, human resources and procurement, causing delays in FAO's response to country requests and project implementation. These issues are examined in greater detail in the section on administrative processes.

Regional Initiatives – rationale and potential for impact

Finding 2:   The value addition of Regional Initiatives and their contribution to country results appears variable. While some Regional Initiatives performed well, a larger number suffered from not having a clear programmatic structure, strong anchorage to a collective regional priority, or institutionalized mechanisms to mobilize resources and upscaling.

39.   Regional Initiatives address a key theme of the SOs and a related priority or problem at global, regional and/or country level in a time-bound manner (FAO, 2019d: 21). Guidance for the Implementation of Regional Initiatives (FAO, 2014a) states that they were intended to serve as a mechanism for ensuring effective delivery and impact of FAO's work on

priority contributions to the SOs in each region. Regional Initiatives are implemented by dedicated delivery teams, headed up by a Regional Initiative Delivery Manager, comprising SP teams and relevant technical staff from Regional, Sub-regional and headquarters.[7] Regional Initiatives have not been comprehensively evaluated so far and a dedicated comprehensive review of FAO's varied experiences in this respect could offer useful perspectives to build on, for future engagement within regions.

40.   The synthesis report observed that Regional Initiatives, while serving as complementing entry points for seeding and field testing interdisciplinary offerings, were limited in scale, had small footprints and lacked medium-term programmatic approaches, including resource mobilization strategies (FAO, 2019a: finding 7). This evaluation confirms that COs are generally more sceptical than regional offices on the value and utility of Regional Initiatives, and noted considerable variance across Regional Initiatives, caused by differing coverage footprints, levels of dynamism in engaging with relevant regional bodies and, Regional Offices specificities.

41.   Regional initiatives as a Delivery Mechanism did not have programming structures with clearly articulated theories of change, medium-term outcomes, resource mobilization strategies and effective monitoring. With limited funding and broad intended coverage, their visibility and potential contribution at the level of the individual country have been significantly curtailed, hence the view from many country-level respondents that they were merely a supplementary source of small funding. With limited resources, the main other opportunity to enhance their value is through the systematic support of knowledge and good practice exchange between Country Offices and regions. Apart from a few exceptions that reinforced links to normative work, Regional Initiatives have not evolved into true flagship programmes focusing on replicating or upscaling innovative solutions across regions through country-level projects.

42.   The Evaluation Team noted that some Regional Initiatives had reportedly been successful and that lessons could be learned from those experiences to develop a model approach. For instance, in Latin American and the Caribbean, policy work on Zero Hunger promoted under Regional Initiative 1 produced good results in terms of policy development and investment leveraging, as it organized the consistent strategic engagement of FAO from regional to country level, as reported in the recent evaluation of the Sub-regional office for Mesoamerica (FAO, 2018d).

43.   In the Near East and North Africa, the Water Scarcity Initiative, by focusing on a primary priority of many countries and complementing major ongoing policy processes in the region, also managed to get traction with many investors and partners, leading to strong regional mobilization on this issue, led by FAO. These examples show that when Regional Initiatives are used as mechanisms to channel FAO's efforts within the region around commonly identified priorities, they can build effective partnerships, generate strategic investments and, ultimately, increase FAO's impact. Successful experiences with Regional Initiatives, based on a strong programmatic steer towards a set of priorities that speak to common needs in the region, could be capitalized on to rethink the role of Regional Offices as regional vehicles of FAO's strategic approach in serving the needs of countries.

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[7] Focus countries were identified based on the potential to leverage ongoing work and good practices, partnerships and prospects for major results in the short term (one year) and medium term (two years).

Integration of CPFs into corporate planning and results reporting

Finding 3:   Country programme results were progressively reflected in the Results Framework. However, an emphasis on ensuring correspondence with the Results Framework promoted mechanistic alignment rather than fostering a strategic programmatic dialogue with governments and donors to address development challenges to sustainable food and agriculture.

44.   A recent report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on Results Based Management (RBM) in the United Nations System observed that RBM has mainly served for "providing a structure for reporting evidence of results to their respective governance bodies" (UNJIU, 2017). FAO's Results Framework is no exception; it was designed to enable the aggregation of results across countries. Hence, the corporate system for planning, monitoring and reporting (PIRES) is also primarily oriented towards corporate reporting. Consequently, they are not well suited to reflecting the priorities, efforts and achievements of context-specific regional or country programmes. Hence, regional and country offices engagement in the biennial planning process focused rather on ensuring conformance of country-level targets with the Strategic Framework architecture, than contextualizing of the Strategic Framework thinking to enhance country programmes.

45.   Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) are driven primarily by the priorities of countries, together with the voluntary contributions available for various thematic areas, as confirmed by the survey. Despite broad acceptance of the logic of the Strategic Framework, in practice, it has been difficult to reflect country programming in the Results Framework, other than through the mechanistic tagging of outcomes to serve corporate reporting. From 2014 to 2017, country programme elements were insufficiently reflected in corporate workplans and Country and Sub-regional Offices were left out of corporate work-planning processes. The MOPAN assessment echoes these views in its observation that "the corporate results framework appears to have limited management value for country-level managers. In corporate terms, the Results Framework enables FAO to demonstrate how it has planned and directed its efforts towards the SOs. But the outcomes included in the framework appear to have little management value" (MOPAN, 2019: 33).

46.   The Evaluation Team notes that the biennial planning process has improved progressively over the past three biennia. The main innovation introduced in the 2018–2019 cycle was a step towards coordinated bottom-up planning, with Country Offices given the opportunity to reflect their results targets and related technical support requests in the corporate planning system. This significant change helped improve the visibility of country priorities and demands for support, strengthened the linkages between FAO's work at headquarters and country level, and made structures available for response. The Country Office survey results confirmed this perceived improvement.

47.   However, it is difficult to assess whether commitments made under the planning process have actually enhanced corporate support to the Country Offices. Commitments made between SP management teams and technical departments, as reflected in service-level agreements at the headquarters level, are neither seen nor monitored in real time at regional or country level. Regional and Country Offices access technical support more on an ad hoc basis, often based on personal networking rather than through formal mechanisms. This suggests a dearth of bottom-up logic in planning FAO's resource investments. Discussions with staff at the decentralized level indicate that the main source of substantive support for Country Offices should logically be the Sub-regional Offices, but their level of engagement does not appear in biennial workplans.

48.   Another important observation is that, despite intentions to adopt a one-programme approach by integrating the work programmes funded from FAO's assessed and voluntary contributions, the SOs actually only applied to the Regular Programme. In practice, the corporate planning system reflected outputs and activities that directly contributed to the SOs. It thus sidelined the substantial amount of FAO work funded from voluntary contributions, which accounts for the bulk of country-level engagement. Significant elements of FAO programmes supported from extra-budgetary resources have thus been poorly reflected in corporate planning and reporting systems. The lack of integration of field programmes funded by voluntary contributions into corporate workplans has fundamentally limited the influence of the Strategic Framework at the decentralized level.

Suitability of corporate planning and systems to programmatic approaches

Finding 4:   FAO's project-based delivery model, skewed toward small projects rather than larger programmes, entails disproportionate transaction costs and limits FAO's potential to have a tangible impact. While FAO managers support the idea that country programmes need to become broader and more strategic, they lack clear guidance and adequate instruments to plan and manage programmatically.

49.   Both the SOs and the SDGs call for complex solutions from multiple sectors and partners, suggesting that FAO needs to identify the most significant contributions it can offer at country level, as it needs to prioritize its limited resources. This calls for greater coherence between FAO projects operating in the same space, as well as with country counterparts and other development-partner initiatives.

50.   Projects are FAO's unit of delivery, especially at country level. The recent Audit of the Project Cycle (FAO, 2019e) noted a highly fragmented portfolio, with more than 1 300 projects active in 2016–2018 and more than 75 percent of all new projects accounting for less than 15 percent of the total portfolio budget of USD 1.5 billion.[8] Almost half (47 percent) of all technical cooperation programmes (TCPs) initiated during the period had budgets of less than USD 100 000. Similarly, more than 44 percent of projects funded from voluntary contributions had budgets of less than USD 500 000 and accounted for only 5 percent of the total. The result of implementing numerous small projects is the high transaction costs of budget-agnostic administrative requirements that add to the workload of technical staff and country managers.

51.   Small-sized projects may be valid in cases where FAO's technical offering can support a Member's specific needs. Still, as noted by the Internal Review of FAO Regional Structures (FAO, 2019f), there is a need to accelerate FAO's move away from a prevalently single-project-based approach to a fully fledged programmatic approach marked by three elements: (1) it encompasses policy and normative work, as well as operational assistance; (2) it integrates core and extra-budgetary resources; and (3) it has a consolidated programme-cycle management structure with the requisite changes to the current project-cycle management model to improve the link with SPs.

52.   Despite the compelling arguments for programmatic approaches, FAO has faced difficulties in establishing large, multi-sector programmes as its means of delivery, in line with the intent of the Strategic Framework. As noted in the SO synthesis report, there are some examples of multi-year and lightly earmarked funding agreements, while programmes such as the Information for Nutrition, Food Security and Resilience for Decision Making (INFORMED) programme or the Emergency Pandemic Threats (EPT) 1 and 2 programmes,

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[8] Of the 1 736 new projects adopted by FAO between 2016 and 2018, half had a budget of less than USD 319 500.

are positive steps towards a more programmatic approach (FAO, 2019a). Still, these types of agreement are too few and far between to represent the norm and counter the fragmentation and the report notes that "predictable and unearmarked donor funding remained elusive despite FAO's corporate commitment and investments into the strategic framework. SP teams interviewed pointed out that SPs were unable to build sufficient traction as resource mobilization modalities. The Strategic Framework was viewed by external stakeholders more as an internal organizing framework in FAO than as the nomenclature of FAO's engagement around donor and country priorities" (FAO, 2019a: para: 84 and 88). Accordingly, the Strategic Framework architecture has not translated into higher or more effective country programme resource mobilization.

53. The inadequacy of programmatic approaches partly stems from the aforementioned issues, such as role clarity, as SP teams' specific role was to create a cohesive programmatic logic across projects. However, this evaluation notes other challenges in pursuing a programmatic approach. A major difficulty is that governments and donors often do not follow a programmatic logic. Governments generally ask FAO for specific technical support of limited scope and donors have continued to fund FAO on (mostly earmarked) projects.

54. In addition, the term "programme" remains undefined, while FAO Project Cycle and Strategic Framework: Basic Principles and Guidelines defines the term "project" as "a time-bound set of actions needed to create a unique set of products, services and results, and an instrument for budget allocation decisions" (FAO, 2014b). This should be addressed in the CPF and UNSDCF processes, which focus on precisely this issue.

Monitoring and learning for better performance and results

Finding 5:   FAO's multiple information systems, designed to serve multiple needs, do not sufficiently support a qualitative analysis of programme performance and lack feedback mechanisms. FAO has invested in corporate outcome assessments, but has not invested sufficiently in an effective institutional monitoring and learning function to generate insights that would enhance performance and the effectiveness of results.

55. The Strategic Framework operation (work planning, monitoring and reporting) is supported by three systems: COIN, for reporting on the work of Country Offices; FPMIS, the repository of project-level information; and PIRES, which hosts the biennial corporate, regional and country results dashboard. Of these, PIRES is most directly focused on the management of the Results Framework and delivery against the SOs. FAO's information management systems are thus fragmented across various systems, which adds significantly to the data-recording burden on teams that need to enter data into multiple systems. Also, the large amount of information collected is not optimally used, particularly when it comes to generating analysis of and insights into the performance of programme portfolios, SOs or countries/regions.

56. FPMIS, designed more as a document repository for all projects, is not a project portfolio management system. It lacks the key features required to actively manage project risk and monitor and control workplan progress. FPMIS's usefulness to managers is, thus, limited. Notably, it fails to offer aggregated feedback beyond the level of individual projects.

57. In addition, the Audit of the Project Cycle identified a number of weaknesses in FAO's project-cycle management and cited the cumbersome nature of procedures related to its implementation (FAO, 2019e: 14).[9] Operational staff confirm that these procedures

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[9] Among them, the absence of FPMIS tools and functionalities to undertake portfolio diagnosis from the vast amount of data therein; the absence of sound project-management practices and standards; weak and under-

generate unreasonable delays in implementation. The Evaluation Team was made aware of a case in which a project had to wait almost two months for an Oracle code, just to make it operational. Such delays due to multiple clearance levels are reportedly standard. Senior management is aware of these shortcomings and practical solutions are under discussion.

58. PIRES, designed primarily to support work planning and corporate results reporting, reflects and monitors only those outputs with a direct contribution to identified corporate outputs that are highly likely to be attained in the biennium. By design, this excludes a large swathe of projects (especially projects funded by voluntary contributions) that are being implemented, but are not yet close to completion. Decentralized offices observe that it distorts the picture of resource allocation and delivery at country level. The fact that PIRES does not offer real-time updates and that its data heaviness can hinder regular online access by Country Offices would further suggest that it is ill-equipped for monitoring and ongoing programme management, despite suggestions that a "monitoring" module exists in PIRES.

59. Another limitation is that PIRES does not adequately reflect extra-budgetary-funded work, even though this accounts for a significant proportion of country-level work. Moreover, the separation of information systems along FAO's two main budgetary lines – PIRES for the Regular Programme of work and FPMIS for field programmes funded from voluntary contributions – only serves to magnify the effects of this inherent constraint on the FAO business model. Bearing in mind the challenges brought about by the lack of predictability of voluntary contributions, a system that integrates activities, regardless of funding line, could better promote the one-programme approach FAO has vowed to pursue since adopting its integrated workplan. More integrated management of both budgets could also extend the influence of the Strategic Framework, currently limited to the smaller Regular Programme.

60. A single, comprehensive system that meets planning, monitoring and reporting requirements may not be practical, given the multiple needs and stakeholders that have to be served with information and analysis at different levels of aggregation and specificity. This underscores the need to supplement information harvested from various tools with qualitative analysis specific to management needs – both for learning and accountability. The evaluation learned of actions initiated by OSP for a harmonized, integrated results monitoring system. The significance of better integrating systems has, therefore, been recognized.

61. FAO has failed to invest sufficiently in a proper qualitative analysis system to monitor the results of its large project portfolio. While FAO's project cycle formally includes "implementation and monitoring", in practice, few monitoring requirements have been set. The Audit of the Project Cycle (FAO, 2019e: 23, Agreed Action 7) found that only 23 percent of projects sampled had well-described arrangements for monitoring, while only 27 percent had prepared a monitoring and evaluation plan in the inception phase. The absence of sound project-monitoring arrangements has been noted repeatedly in evaluations and audits, but many Country Offices continue to implement projects without plans, dedicated staff or budgets for monitoring and evaluation. The audit was unable to identify any clear guidelines or capacity development programmes for monitoring, which staff cited as an important need.[10]

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resourced quality-assurance mechanisms; and lack of systematic monitoring and documenting lessons from project implementation.

[10] Fifty-two percent of all project personnel respondents surveyed for the audit said they needed more training on monitoring and evaluation, the most requested area for training. Forty-six percent of LTOs said their knowledge

62. CPFs and Regional Initiatives have seen practically no investment in monitoring, with the notable exception of the SP5 team's efforts to build monitoring, evaluation and learning capacity, with support provided to decentralized offices in the form of guidelines, training workshops and technical support. The CPF synthesis found that "once the CPF is formulated, often there is not an effective oversight mechanism at the country level that guides the implementation, based on the performance and the results achieved". The lack of capacity for monitoring and evaluation in decentralized offices was an area where staff expressed concern in a survey conducted by the Office of the Inspector-General (OIG) (FAO, 2016b: para. 55 and 92). Monitoring and evaluation posts are not part of the decentralized structures at Country, Sub-regional or Regional Office level, so the monitoring and evaluation function set-up is ad hoc, usually catering to reporting needs rather than being used to feed into programme improvements.

63. The persistent status quo, despite consistent reports of inadequate monitoring, points not just to a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation planning and capacity, but also a culture in which monitoring is not given the appropriate level of importance and emphasis. It is not clear whether governance mechanisms, such as the Corporate Programmes Monitoring Board (CPMB) and the Programme Implementation Monitoring Board (PIMB), have emphasized leadership on strategic and programmatic monitoring. The Audit also noted that the profile, authority and resources of the Quality Assurance and Monitoring Unit have not been commensurate with the importance of its role as the internal oversight mechanism on programme implementation. The absence of core funding to support a minimum core team (now there is only one regular position) to assure the quality of programme delivery presents an inordinate risk to what is a key function in terms of organizational performance.

64. The evaluation echoes the MOPAN finding that "the Operational Monitoring Dashboard does not examine results/outcomes and predominantly focuses on processes and output delivery rather than the quality of results" (FAO, 2019a: 137). While existing systems serve the needs of results reporting, they do not serve the needs of programme managers and do not support the robust qualitative analysis required by senior management (the PIMB, SPs, Assistant Directors General) to address key questions, such as:

- In which geographies and programme areas is FAO is doing well?
- In how many countries and how sustainably has FAO contributed to an improvement in rural women's access to resources?
- What are the roles of FAO and its partners and their principal contributions to the state of hunger and malnutrition, poverty, natural-resource sustainability and the resilience of food systems and livelihoods?
- Why are important outcome indicators not improving, despite FAO delivering its outputs in full? Where do gaps remain? How can governments address these?
- What are the factors that explain FAO's success or failure at country level?
- Why do a large percentage of FAO projects experience delays and extensions? What are the key elements impeding the timely and effective delivery of FAO's projects?
- What support does FAO provide to countries in relation to the SDGs, specifically in terms of formulating theories of change, policy uptake, investment mobilization, capacities for upscaling and monitoring progress against indicators?

65. FAO has invested significantly in biennial Corporate Outcome Assessments (COAs) to collect data on Strategic Framework outcome-level indicators to monitor FAO's impact at

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and understanding of their role in monitoring could be improved through clearer policies, procedures and guidelines.

country level, to identify changes and challenges in the country-level enabling environment,[11] issues that could impede progress and the extent to which countries have made necessary reforms and established the required capacity to achieve the SOs. According to FAO, no other UN agency has invested as much as FAO in developing outcome-monitoring mechanisms to connect agency accountability boundaries to influences in the enabling environment.

66. The COA has become progressively resource intensive: the last COA survey in 2016–17 covered 96 countries (and more than 3 000 participants), up from 55 countries in the previous survey. However, the exercise has not fully served its purpose, as the results of these assessments have been used only to a limited extent. This evaluation noted a number of gaps from a management learning perspective and, further, that biennial programme implementation reports had not prompted serious deliberation at the Programme Committee or Council prior to endorsement. Also, while the COA collects a large volume of information, these have been not been used adequately by programme managers.

67. Responsibilities for planning, monitoring and reporting currently converge under OSP. This may be the right place to coordinate the much-needed corporate qualitative assessment function to supplement and analyse the information emerging from corporate results monitoring systems, so long as this role is clearly distinguished from OSP's other function of corporate reporting..

Resource and investment mobilization – alignment with decentralization and the emerging landscape

Finding 6:   FAO has been progressively engaging with donors on funding the SPs. However, resource mobilization capacities in decentralized offices remain weak, even though bilateral funding decisions are increasingly being made at country level. Furthermore, FAO has yet to develop new business models that focus on investment leverage for national programmes, in addition to programmes from voluntary funds, as a way of increasing its impact on country development.

68. The resource mobilization function has evolved steadily over the past few years. In headquarters, the establishment of a new Business Development Task Force (BDTF) to coordinate actions and new resource mobilization strategies reflected a transition from a donor-recipient relationship to a resource-partnership approach. While FAO has not attracted much funding around the SOs, which faced challenges as a result of being too broad in scope and not easily marketable, there is now notable proactive engagement by the unit in charge of resource mobilization with the SPs and technical divisions through the BDTF mechanism. Twelve focus areas aligned to SDGs have been identified for business development. Also, SP teams are increasingly included in donor engagement missions, especially in 'strategic dialogue' events.

69. Nevertheless, despite significant decentralization of technical capacities (from headquarters to Regional and Sub-regional Offices), the resource mobilization function has not been fully articulated in decentralized offices. This does not chime with decentralization trend in bilateral donor decision-making to country level.[12] This has significant implications,

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[11] As described in the Corporate Monitoring and Reporting Section of FAO's website (FAO, 2019g), http://www.fao.org/about/strategic-planning/corporate-baseline-survey/en/.

[12] FAO systems do not specify where resources are mobilized, so the evaluation used the reported share of about 79 percent of voluntary contributions (per PIR 2017) channelled to decentralized operations in 2016–2017 as a proxy to illustrate this trend.

as the largest share of extra-budgetary resources is mobilized for country-level work.[13] There are no formal resource mobilization action plans at regional level, nor resource mobilization indicators to establish accountability in the decentralized offices.[14] The SO synthesis report (FAO, 2019a) and this evaluation's regional consultations revealed a need for increased capacities and backstopping at the decentralized level in donor mapping, competitive intelligence, proposal development and support to handle the rise in competitive "request for proposal" submissions.

70. Looking ahead, with the magnitude of resources needed for SDG financing, development financing discussions are shifting from funding to financing, especially as development assistance flows decline in countries that have emerged or are graduating from least developed country (LDC) status. This calls for a rethinking of FAO's approach to resource and investment mobilization in the next Strategic Framework. It will be useful to include investment mobilization as a metric in the Results Framework, based on or linked to SDG indicators already accepted by countries. In recent years, there has been growing acceptance that private-sector investment is crucial both for sustainability and the greater public good of the food system. This necessitates greater emphasis on partnerships with the private sector.

71. The SO synthesis report (FAO, 2019a) touched on the importance of the Investment Centre (DPI) in support of investment mobilization. DPI's work cuts across all SOs and its global footprint, specialist expert resources and large portfolio of investment operations for international institutions provide important entry points for leveraging FAO's technical expertise and strategic approaches. The DPI, which has increased its regional presence as well, is best placed to steer FAO through the funding-to-financing transition, which will call for engagement with new stakeholders and instruments such as blended finance, sustainable development bonds, private-sector impact investments, etc. (FAO, 2019a: para. 95). However, other divisions have important roles in complementing investments through knowledge, dialogue, research and partnerships.

2.2 Effectiveness and efficiency of administrative policies and procedures in supporting the integrated delivery of FAO's missions

Balance and distribution of technical capacities to align with decentralized delivery

Finding 7:   In the context of implementing the Strategic Framework and decentralization, FAO reallocated human resources and increased its overall technical capacity, despite a flat budget environment. Appropriately distributing technical capacity between regions and ensuring timely access, so as to meet country needs, are continued challenges.

72. Since 2012, there has been a major push to transform FAO's human resources to support the delivery of the Revised Strategic Framework, which called for new skill sets to support programmatic thinking, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral design, results-based management approaches and staff with a high technical orientation. New areas of expertise also became important: social protection, decent rural employment, value chains and

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[13] The rough distribution of programme delivery shares is 20 percent global products/programmes, 20 percent regional initiatives and 60 percent CPFs.

[14] The Audit of Resource Mobilization (FAO, 2016c) recommended four key actions: (1) more detailed resource-mobilization responsibilities for FAORs and SP leads and the linking of accountability to work-plans and performance appraisals; (2) improve data quality and pipeline management to gain a realistic picture of resources; (3) RI delivery managers to develop official regional resource-mobilization plans; and (4) South-South and Resource Mobilization Division (TCS) and OSD support to fill capacity gaps in regional offices.

climate change, for instance. At the same time, the drive for greater efficiencies and savings in the face of a flat Regular Budget resource over four biennial planning cycles has been a key challenge.

73.   The adjustments to staff posts arising from decentralization and mobility transfers, in addition to the creation of SP management teams drawn from headquarters technical units, led to a perceived loss of technical capacity. However, evidence from OSP (FAO, 2015) and the Independent Assessment of FAO's Technical Capacity (Cleaver, Golan and Sood, 2017) substantiate claims that FAO has managed to preserve its technical capacity in the face of rising staff costs and a flat nominal budget. The Independent Assessment observed that the increased use of non-staff human resources (NSHR) – consultants and subscribers to personal service agreements (PSAs) – served to increase technical capacity. Furthermore, it highlighted a shift in technical posts funded by the General Fund in different technical areas and enabling functions, in line with the intent of the Strategic Framework.[15]

74.   That FAO has managed to preserve and slightly increase its overall technical capacity does not necessarily mean that technical capacity is available or accessible where it is needed. The evaluation found that FAO does not make the most efficient use of its overall capacity, owing to inadequate staff allocation mechanisms and to a lack of clarity on the profiles required in each function and location.

75.   A degree of staff mobility is required to adjust capacity, as recognized by the introduction of FAO's mobility policy. Staff experience, however, suggests that personnel reassignments did not appear to be based on a systematic analysis of the profiles needed in different office locations. While specialized expertise might be needed in headquarters to serve needs globally, Regional and Sub-regional Offices would rather avail of experts with broader technical profiles due to the limited number of technical posts per office. In addition, there is a lack of institutionalized mechanisms to ensure that analysis and adjustments of the skills mix required to meet the different priorities of each (sub-) region are done on a regular basis. Evidence shows that this has been done by some offices, such as the Sub-Regional Office for Mesoamerica, as reported in the evaluation of its work, with positive outcomes on the sub-regional office's capacity to respond to country needs (FAO, 2018d). Also, as part of preparations for the FAO Programme of Work and Budget 2018–2019, senior management undertook an exercise to match the technical requirements of the Strategic Programmes and Objective 6 with the Organization's technical capacity. This led to the reprofiling of some technical posts in headquarters and the Regional Offices in line with the requirement of staffing for fostering more programmatic and strategic country programmes.

76.   As Country Offices rely on external technical expertise, capacities should be nearby to provide immediate and contextualized support. The experience of FAO in Mesoamerica demonstrates that, with a critical mass of technical expertise, Sub-Regional Offices can serve country needs effectively (FAO, 2018d). Still, the evaluation notes that technical capacities in Sub-regional Offices have not generally been commensurate with needs. Forty-two percent of survey respondents noted limited to significant capacity gaps in their Sub-regional offices. In particular, many cited policy and investment support are areas of expertise that require more investment, so as to increase FAO's potential impact in its core areas of work.

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[15] For example, Technical Cooperation (35), Technical Management (26), Information and Knowledge Management (21) and Economics (21) have all gained posts in years, while the number of posts in Land and Water Management, Livestock and Land Tenure has declined by four.

77.   Another observation is that technical experts in decentralized offices are being burdened by operational tasks that reduce the time they can devote to technical advisory and support work. This stems from the fact that technical and programme management functions are not viewed as requiring different expertise or talent. Lastly, the strict compartmentalization of expertise by region, according to which a stock of expertise cannot be used to support Country Offices in other regions, also appears to run counter to efficient human-resource use and calls for greater flexibility.

Efficiency gains versus effectiveness of delivery

Finding 8:   Recent administrative policy decisions, while leading to efficiency savings over the years, have had significant unintended consequences for the effectiveness and efficiency of delivery and pose reputational risk for FAO among its partners and counterparts.

78.   As the SO synthesis report pointed out, despite strong conceptualization and commitment, the Strategic Framework encountered some implementation challenges and was particularly affected by operational and administrative aspects (FAO, 2019a). Although the operational and administrative processes did not emanate from the Strategic Framework, they impacted its delivery. The evaluation highlights some issues below, which have reportedly affected the quality of delivery, especially in decentralized offices. The analysis in this section should not be construed as a flaw of the Strategic Framework itself, but recognized as a constraint of the enabling environment.

79.   While implementing the Strategic Framework, FAO has had to cope with the constraints of a flat Regular Budget for eight years. Various administrative controls and procedures have been pursued to achieve cost reductions and efficiency improvements over the years. Over the past eight years, more than USD 150 million in corporate savings have been generated by cutting budgeted posts and related costs and by modernizing and streamlining administrative structures and operational processes. Major savings have come from a reduction in operational posts and budgets – a 32 percent cut in the post count and a 33 percent reduction in budget. These were reallocated to improving IT systems and human-resource capacity and to financing for decentralized offices, resulting in a 13 percent rise in the number of budgeted posts and an 18 percent increase in budgets.[16] Another noteworthy endeavour was the expansion of FAO's field presence without a corresponding increase in costs by adding Sub-regional Offices and Liaison and Partnership Offices, funded from host-country contributions. FAO's austerity measures drew attention in the MOPAN assessment, which noted that "since 2012–13, FAO has operated within a flat nominal regular budget of USD 1 billion per biennium and has delivered sustained savings over the period, estimated by FAO to be worth over USD 140 million" (MOPAN, 2019: 39).

80.   The pressures of operating with a flat core budget[17] prompted FAO to develop practical adaptive strategies, such as maintaining around a 15 percent vacancy rate and using post savings for programme support. The MOPAN 2018–19 review voiced concern that this "may well have contributed to cost savings but run the risk of not maintaining a stable core capacity in the Organization" (MOPAN, 2019: 40).

81.   The evaluation found several examples of administrative procedures related mainly to consultant recruitment, travel and procurement that had an adverse impact on the quality of delivery and which demonstrated major trade-offs between short-term efficiencies and

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[16] Information provided in discussions with the Deputy Director General Operations (DDO)
[17] Of which more than 70 percent is for staff remuneration and 14 percent is for TCPs

the effectiveness of longer-term results. Cumulatively, these are affecting delivery efficiency and quality, as well as FAO's corporate reputation with governments, partner agencies and donors.

82.   One consequence was the incidence of project delays. While Organization-wide data were not made available, data from one region showed an alarming trend: 67 percent of the 681 projects implemented in 2016 to 2019 saw delays, 54 percent were no-cost extensions and 12 percent led to cost increases (Table 1). According to the staff who provided the information, only a small number of these delays can be attributed to donors and counterpart clearance; the major cause was cumbersome internal processes, in addition to ambitious timelines in some cases.

Table 1: An illustration of widespread project delays at FAO

Funding method	Actual end date not postponed (with or without an increase in budget)	Actual end date postponed	
		No increase in budget	Increased budget
TCPs	125	224	29
% of all TCPs	*33%*	***59%***	*8%*
Extra-budgetary	103	144	56
% of all extra-budgetary projects	*34%*	***48%***	***18%***
All projects	228	368	85
% of all projects	33%	54%	12%

Note: Based on 681 projects implemented in one region in 2016 to 2019
Source: FAO Regional Office staff

Staff and consultant recruitment

Finding 9:   FAO has made some improvements in the efficiency of its staff recruitment processes, but continues to experience difficulties in the timely recruitment of consultants. Well-intended measures, such as language requirements for consultants, have hindered recruitment, along with a lack of appropriate delegation of human-resource decisions.

83.   FAO introduced measures that have improved the efficiency of staff recruitment. OIG's 2018 Audit of Recruitment and Onboarding of Professional Staff found that the Organization had followed good practices and made several improvements in recruitment since the previous audit of 2011 (FAO, 2018e). Improvements included the introduction of generic job descriptions, the use of technology to speed up recruitment and to attract a geographically diverse pool of applicants and the use of rosters to pre-qualify a pool of candidates for vacancies. While acknowledging progress in reducing the time taken for recruitment to 120 days, the audit raised concerns that tracking the progress of each step of the recruitment process was not sufficiently detailed to identify bottlenecks. The OIG survey of internal stakeholders revealed concerns about the length of the recruitment process, the lack of transparency and fairness and the lack of information about the process (FAO, 2018e).

84.   Similar concerns emerged during this evaluation survey – 47 percent of respondents reported that they were unable to recruit suitable personnel in a timely manner and the

same percentage indicated that procedures for recruitment of non-staff human resources (such as consultants) were not easy to understand. Concerns about delays in recruitment were echoed in the regional meetings as well.

85. With a freeze in the recruitment of full-time staff, FAO has increasingly relied on sourcing external expertise through short-term consultancy contracts, so delays in the recruitment of consultants puts delivery at risk. Furthermore, recruitment generated more negative responses than any other area covered by the FAOR survey. The many changes in the rules and procedures for recruitment have also created additional confusion for hiring managers: 47 percent of respondents lamented the complexity of recruitment procedures for non-staff human resources.

86. Some well-intentioned measures have had unintended consequences for delivery and have raised the risk of talent attrition from the pool of technical expertise built up over the long term – a distinct disadvantage for FAO in a highly competitive market for technical expertise.

87. FAO's language requirements, according to which staff and consultants should have a minimum knowledge of two United Nations official languages[18] and provide official certification, while intended to promote multilingualism in FAO as an international organization, has posed difficulties for regions in recruiting qualified and best available international staff and consultants. While proficiency in multiple official languages can be an advantage in undertaking missions to different regions, its relevance is questionable for assignment-based contracts, where proficiency in just one identified (set of) language(s) is necessary. In such cases, the requirement of proficiency in two languages becomes irrelevant, so should not be a deciding eligibility factor. A more practical requirement in such cases would be a working knowledge of the languages required for work or a specific assignment, as defined by the hiring unit.

88. The application of these new requirements has disqualified the best experts available without any evidence of the adverse effects of their not meeting the requirement. While this requirement can foster efforts towards learning and obtaining language certification by some, there is also the risk of attrition of senior expertise due to the rigid application of the regulation across the board. The certificate requirement has added further complexity, as not all consultants, especially high-level external technical experts, have certificates to confirm their language proficiency.

Ex ante controls and delegation of authority

 Finding 10:   A lack of appropriate delegation, heavy reliance on ex ante controls and limited flexibility in the application of administrative policies have affected the efficiency of the Organization and created a major disincentive for managers to take ownership of the Strategic Framework.

89. To ensure control of recruitment and stricter implementation of human resources (HR) policies, the Director-General's Bulletin 2016/35, issued in 2016 (FAO, 2016d), required all proposed HR decisions on appointments, promotion, transfer and change of duty station for all professional and general service staff, irrespective of grade, funding or duration, to be submitted to the Director of the Office of Human Resources (OHR) prior to implementation. In the case of consultants, all contracts funded from the Regular Budget

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[18] A working knowledge of English, French or Spanish <u>and</u> a limited knowledge of one of the other two languages <u>or</u> a limited knowledge of Arabic, Chinese or Russian is required for a consultancy contract, while Personal Service Agreement-type contracts require a working knowledge of any one of these languages.

for a period exceeding six months must be submitted to OHR for the approval of the Director-General (FAO, 2018f). The lack of delegated authority for recruitment decisions is a major concern across the regions and in offices and departments at headquarters. More than half (53 percent) of respondents to the FAOR survey said they lacked sufficient delegated authority in HR matters. The lack of adequate delegation was also identified as a cause of delays in recruitment, as illustrated by one response to the survey:

"The recruitment of international consultants has become the most critical issue for FAO at the country level, undermining our reputation with government counterparts and partners alike, while directly affecting our capacity to implement projects. This also affects our capacity to mobilize resources. It is of paramount importance that FAO headquarters finds a way for us to reduce the time needed to recruit consultants. It is also critical to regain some flexibility in sectors where only a handful of experts are available worldwide." (Respondent to the FAOR survey)

90. Insufficient delegation of authority is also an issue in the areas of travel and procurement. In the case of travel, from February 2019 (FAO, 2018g),[19] FAO introduced a requirement that departments purchase flights at least 15 days in advance to obtain better value for money, as recommended by the JIU and in line with the practice of several other United Nations agencies.[20] Although FAO's 15-day advance purchase of international flights may seem like a sound approach to managing travel costs, its rigid application poses a risk to effective delivery and ability to respond at short notice.

91. The 15-day rule can have a detrimental effect in situations where staff are required to attend important country-level meetings convened at short notice, for example. The Evaluation Team learned of one such case, where FAO was unable to send senior people for consultations related to the United Nations Reform process. At the said event, other agencies were represented by a contingent of senior people, while FAO could only send one Assistant Representative from the local office to the meeting. Prioritizing the rule over the value at stake can come at a huge cost in terms of programme effectiveness.

92. Exceptions or waivers must be approved by the relevant Deputy Director-General, the Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development Department (ADG-ES) or the Director of Cabinet, however, the grounds on which exceptions will be granted have not been specified. The Emergency Response and Resilience Team is required to apply for a waiver for L3 emergencies and, while these waivers are always approved, the additional layer of administration adds to the workload, creating inefficiencies.

93. The requirement to obtain waivers from the most senior level of the Organization is a disincentive and the evaluation perceives a risk that senior managers may avoid seeking waivers, even though they may have a legitimate reason for not complying with the 15-day limit. This can have a negative impact on delivery and on FAO's reputation. Another United Nations agency gives managers discretion when it comes to deviating from the advance-purchase rule and requires the reason for the deviation to be entered into the travel electronic resource planning (ERP) system. The frequency of deviations and reasons for them are monitored to ensure there is no abuse of the policy. Such a system of retrospective accountability could make the policy more flexible and hold the relevant manager accountable for the decisions taken.

94. FAO's travel policy also places limits on the number of days certain categories of staff may travel (FAO, 2013b). The JIU supports the use of limits on travel days, to limit or eliminate unnecessary travel and expenditure, and to reduce travel-related risk. Feedback from the

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[19] FAO Administrative Circular 2018/8, 13 December 2018 on Travel Planning.
[20] Of the 21 UN agencies with advance-purchase travel policies, 19 required purchases to be made within 14 calendar days or more of departure (UNJIU, 2017).

regional meetings suggests a need for flexibility with regard to the ceiling on the number of travel days, especially for technical staff backstopping several country offices, as the context in which the work is carried out may be vastly different. Technical Officers in different regions, or even within the same region, may have very different travel requirements and setting the same ceilings may not be practical.

95.   In the area of procurement, departments and decentralized offices, in particular, reported difficulties in procuring goods and services in a punctual manner, with negative consequences for the effectiveness and efficiency of FAO's programmes. Procurement, even for emergency responses, is often untimely, which can have direct consequences for vulnerable communities' food security, as well as FAO's reputation as a partner in emergency responses. Procurement delays may relate to limitations on delegation, as perceived by 39 percent of survey respondents. Delays may also be occasioned by lack of understanding of procedures; 38 percent of respondents disagreed that procurement procedures were easy to understand and follow.

96.   An analysis led by the Emergency Response and Resilience Team demonstrated that the 64–70 working days required to complete the standard procurement process in itself caused major delays, causing FAO to be too late to distribute seeds for the planting season, for example. The Evaluation Team's analysis concluded, too, that the risk of late distribution was high, due to time lapses imposed by administrative steps and clearances, as well as the impediments to initiating actions (recruitment, procurement or letters of agreement) before the actual receipt of funding. This corroborated the findings of various other evaluations. The Emergency Response and Resilience Team offered suggestions to improve timeliness, including the issuance of Calls for Expressions of Interest to potential providers and the assessment of proposals in advance of receiving the budget. The internal audit by the OIG suggested that a lack of clarity as to the role of Lead Technical Officers in the procurement process was a cause of non-compliance. Delays might also be a result of poor procurement planning.

97.   The proposed changes to the Administrative Manual Section 502 on the Procurement of Goods, Works and Services (MS 502) respond to some concerns raised by users of procurement services and will entail an increase in delegation thresholds for Country, Sub-regional and Regional Offices. They are a positive step, but there are aspects that need further attention. There is a need for differentiated procurement procedures for low-cost, low-risk items. Decentralized offices and Country Offices, in particular, must have a minimum capacity to perform procurement functions; if this capacity is currently not sufficient, it should be strengthened. Sound procurement planning should be an integral part of the project management cycle and the issue needs to be given greater attention in overall efforts to improve procurement in FAO.

98.   The combined effect of procedures on recruitment, travel and procurement have created a widespread perception in the decentralized offices that controls and procedures to improve efficiency have affected delivery and put at risk both opportunities and FAO's reputation among its partners. What's more, the administrative environment's centralized and control-oriented culture has created a perception of lack of trust in frontline teams. Delegation of authority helps to create a climate of trust and empowerment that is essential to the effective and efficient functioning of organizations. Managers in FAO are held accountable for achieving results, but not empowered to make decisions on the recruitment and selection of the human resources they need to achieve the results. The common perception that the Organization does not trust managers to take good decisions does little to further acceptance of the Strategic Framework and a willingness to be held

accountable for results. The potential risks inherent in increased delegation should, indeed, be managed with solid accountability measures, bolstered by appropriate ex post verification mechanisms, as commonly practised in other United Nations organizations.

2.3 Appropriateness of the Results Framework as a structure for planning, delivering and reporting FAO results in the context of the 2030 Agenda and United Nations Reform

Results Framework – structural adequacy for reporting on development contributions

Finding 11: **The Results Framework's emphasis on reporting at the aggregate level does not facilitate analysis of or insights into the quality of results at country or programme portfolio level. The reporting insufficiently reflects how and where FAO has improved food systems, livelihoods, resilience or resource sustainability and lacks "a human face". Also, there are no milestones to show the progression from FAO outputs to uptake in policy, investment and programmes or the emanation of development outcomes at country level.**

99.   The Strategic Framework brought about a major improvement in terms of integrating FAO's global, regional and country-level work into a single results framework, presented in terms of outputs, for which FAO is fully accountable, and outcomes, for which responsibility is collectively shared by FAO and other stakeholders. Still, its primary purpose as an accountability tool for reporting on results at the corporate level means there are implicit trade-offs involved in aggregation across a diversity of programmes, geographies and contexts. Thus, as designed, the Results Framework is insufficient to provide insights into the quality of results and needs to be supplemented by other forms of monitoring and qualitative analysis.

100.   The main limitation of the FAO's Results Framework is the absence of clear linkages and milestones that causally connect FAO's outputs to the listed outcomes and objectives. The linkage is weak between the duration and level of effort represented by FAO's outputs and the scale, resources and time horizon required to achieve targeted outcomes. Over time, the use of qualifiers for outcome and output indicators has sought to show the milestones of change, however, these have not been systematically measured. More importantly, while outcomes are recognized as the joint responsibility of FAO and its partners, FAO's outcome-level responsibilities are not specified. Nor does the Results Framework delineate the main contributions, levels and sequences of effort and mutual accountability between FAO and its key partners, particularly governments and donors, in achieving these outcomes. As the SO4 evaluation succinctly put it, the SO results statements were deemed too abstract (FAO, 2017b: para. 44–45).

101.   The Results Framework also lacks a time dimension and a "human face", offering few insights into the progress of change and longer-term impacts of FAO's work in terms of livelihoods and food systems. These insights would require additional assessments with appropriate methodologies, in addition to impact evaluations, of which there have been only a few. Also, PIRES does not have the functionality to show progress over multiple biennia at country or SO level. This could be rectified by the new integrated information management system being discussed within FAO for design in the next biennium.

102.   This limitation is characteristic of corporate results frameworks in general and a common limitation of using indicators that aggregate corporate performance over vastly diverse

contexts. Thus, it is not unique to FAO and is a weakness of all such frameworks that seek to report at corporate level on a big and diverse country programme footprint.[21]

103. The MOPAN assessment observed that FAO had strengthened both its planning and reporting processes (MOPAN, 2019: 15), but also noted that the corporate Results Framework appeared to have limited value for country-level managers, as there was no systematic assessment of results from FAO's field-programme portfolio by country or type of engagement, even though reporting on individual projects and programmes was a key part of governance arrangements with funders. At the outcome level, indicators are complicated and difficult to interpret, while at the output level, indicators are heavily focused on activity/process rather than effects/results. Furthermore, the method of aggregating results separately at each level makes it almost impossible to discern connections/causality between levels of results. The outcomes included in the Results Framework appear to have little management value and the emphasis of assessments is on outputs, which are reviewed more frequently and are more useful to SP leads. Output targets, despite improvements, are still viewed as more indicative of FAO's intended engagement, rather than what is needed to "move the needle" at the outcome level.

Visibility of normative work

Finding 12:   FAO's normative and technical work is not captured sufficiently by the Results Framework, partly owing to the formulation of outcome statements. Indicators report more on knowledge production than knowledge capitalization through uptake and translation into capacities and policies linked to development outcomes.

104. The Results Framework's emphasis on strengthening field-level effectiveness and the matrix-structure arrangements for implementation raised some concerns (both internally and in governance structures) over the treatment of FAO's traditional normative work. These concerns related to the reduction in regular budget resources and capacity (posts) for technical work, the loss of autonomy of Technical Units over corporate technical activities stemming from various FAO mechanisms and the visibility of normative work in the Results Framework.

105. Even MOPAN's 2017–2018 assessment noted the "insufficient visibility [of] the Organization's crucial normative work" in the corporate results framework, which it identified as a key weakness that "does not do justice to FAO's key role as a knowledge provider" (MOPAN, 2019: 9).

106. This evaluation took note of FAO Information Note No. 3, management's submission to the Programme Committee, which maintains that "there is no compromise on scope and resources of normative and standards setting work in the Strategic Framework. Resources for Corporate Technical Areas (CTAs) have been maintained at same levels, and technical capacity of units at headquarters and decentralized offices is maintained and will be strengthened in future" (FAO, 2015). It clarified CTAs as mandated areas of work to be managed directly by heads of organizational units and noted that additional resources were allocated by SP leads for putting the technical norms and standards into practice for policy dialogue, capacity development, technical advice and support (for example, implementation support for voluntary guidelines).

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[21] A perusal of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Integrated Results Reporting Framework (UNDP, n.d.) shows similar features, as does the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 2018 *Learning from Results-Based Management Evaluations and Reviews* document (OECD, 2018: 13).

107.   The note also describes measures that were introduced to strengthen the dialogue between the technical managers responsible for normative and standard-setting work, the SP leads and managers in the decentralized offices, to facilitate two-way feedback, building on the priority needs of countries and regions, especially those concerning cross-border issues and requiring interdisciplinary work (FAO, 2015).

108.   The evaluation concurs with this approach, noting that FAO's technical and programmatic work are not to be seen as mutually exclusive, but as complementary. However, this evaluation also notes that the indicators for policy advice and normative work are insufficiently oriented towards assessing normative knowledge uptake and translation into capacity, policy and transformative investments linked to development outcomes. There is a disconnect between the high quality of FAO's knowledge products and the efforts made to capitalize on that knowledge through targeted communication, user engagement methods and the monitoring of knowledge application. The indicators of technical outputs are rather ambiguous when it comes to measurement and monitoring. Also, the proposed measures to gauge the quality of technical leadership are not formally reported (see Box 3).

Box 3: Outcome 6.1 – quality and integrity of the technical and normative work of FAO

Indicator: Quality of technical leadership
Measured by: A survey methodology to assess the feedback of stakeholders on elements of technical leadership, such as ensuring the excellence of technical knowledge, compliance with technical policies, technical integrity, capacity to respond to emerging issues, advancing the fundamental understanding of challenges and creating options in the main disciplines through the Technical Committees
Outputs

6.1.1 Ensure the excellence of the technical knowledge required to achieve and support the delivery of the SOs through core technical leadership of technical department ADGs; creation of technical networks and the delivery of technical expertise to the Strategic Programmes and Corporate Technical Activities

6.1.2 Ensure compliance with technical policies, technical integrity and coherence of FAO's interventions across geographical boundaries

6.1.3 Provide capacity to respond to emerging issues, support to exploring new approaches and innovations to adapt solutions to a changing environment, and contribute to resolving challenges through collaborative efforts using the multidisciplinary fund

6.1.4 Advance fundamental understanding of challenges and creating options in the main disciplines through the Technical Committees (Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture, Committee on Forestry, Committee on Agriculture and Committee on Commodity Problems)

6.1.5 Ensure preparation of flagship publications on the "State of" food insecurity, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, and forestry

6.1.6 Support and promote policy and technical dialogue at global and regional level through institutional representation by technical departments and the Chief Statistician

Source: FAO (2017c)

Management of change

Finding 13:   The Strategic Framework, with its significant scale and complexity, was not a marginal change. Implementation followed more of a learning-by-doing approach, without a systematic change-management process that included assessments of staff ownership, buy-in and due risk management.

109.   The Strategic Framework has been a massive undertaking for FAO over the past six years, involving the introduction of large and complex changes. In this regard, the evaluation noted that in 2011, for the previous version of the Strategic Framework, FAO had developed a culture-change strategy and action plan to support and sustain the cultural change set

out in its Strategic Framework. The strategy was informed by a comprehensive survey of all employees, irrespective of contract type or location, and sought their views on work environment and relationships, attitudes towards FAO, their understanding of and support for the reform process, and their communication needs. However, this does not seem to have continued: there was no systematic approach to change management for the Revised Strategic Framework.

110. FAO's approach has been to introduce the change and fix problems as they arise. Changes were communicated primarily through circulars and emails and tended to be one-directional. Interviews in headquarters and in the regions identified a lack of attention to managing change as a weakness of the Organization. Country Offices reportedly had little to no involvement in the conceptualization of the changes and received insufficient guidance to make a meaningful link between the SOs and country-level projects. There was also a lack of guidance given to the new roles of the SP Management Team and the Regional Initiatives.

111. FAO has not conducted a periodic employee climate survey in recent years, so lacks comprehensive systematic data on employees' perceptions of the work environment and the impact of changes on their performance and well-being. Employee climate surveys are a necessary two-way communication tool between employers and employees. They are especially important in large global organizations to give employees the opportunity to express their views without fear or favour and to gauge their responses to organizational change. These surveys also provide management with feedback on what works well and what should be improved to enable employees to perform effectively, so that the Organization achieves its objectives.

112. MOPAN 2018 raised concerns about the absence of an overall change strategy to manage the structural and system transformation FAO had introduced: "In the absence of an overall change strategy, there is a danger that innovations may be introduced ad hoc with important elements addressed only once they become problematic. For example, FAO's internal audit recently concluded that implementation of the Strategic Framework in decentralized offices is still at a relatively immature stage, with insufficient attention paid to coordination challenges and differences in capacity across offices" (MOPAN, 2019: 21).

113. FAO participated in JIU's 2018[22] system-wide review of organizational change management and intends to develop its own change-management plan, to be implemented in the next biennium, subject to the approval of the incoming Director-General. The OHR is leading the process and has indicated that it would be drawing extensively on the work of the JIU.

Integration of SDGs into the Results Framework

Finding 14:   Recent efforts to redefine work areas towards the SDGs, with clear contributions to them, are notable, especially the alignment of the Results Framework to the SDG targets. Efforts need to be furthered through greater integration of SDGs into in the next Strategic Framework.

114. FAO made major changes in the MTP 2018-2021 with a view to incorporating SDG indicators into the Results Framework (FAO, 2017c). FAO's work was mapped against all SDGs, revealing that FAO was relevant to 40 SDG targets through 53 indicators. All 38 SO

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[22] The JIU conducted a system-wide review of organizational change management to understand the success factors underlying it and to learn lessons for the future. The report is being finalized and will be available before end 2019.

indicators and 24 of the 42 outcome targets and indicators were replaced by SDG targets and indicators. SDGs 1, 2 and 15 feature most prominently; all eight SDG 2 targets, all but one SDG 1 targets and half of the SDG 15 targets are embodied in the results matrix. In the FAOR survey, Country Offices reported that the Results Framework significantly facilitated the incorporation of SDGs into the CPF planning and reporting systems.

115. As the SDGs are nationally owned and led, it is even more important to delineate the roles, responsibilities and mutual accountabilities of FAO, governments, other partners, donors and financial institutions, as well as the level of effort required to achieve the SDGs. This will need to be even more explicit in the new UNSDCFs, which will be monitored primarily through progress against selected SDG targets. With the requirement for all agency-level country programme documents to be drawn from the UNSDCF, the next CPF rounds will need to spell out the arrangements, mutual responsibilities and accountabilities between FAO, country counterparts and resource partners, as key stakeholders of influence, specifying what each must deliver to achieving outcomes.

116. To be actionable and measurable, the Results Framework also requires milestones that mark the progression from FAO outputs to uptake in policy, investment and programmes, as well as monitoring to assess the influence on SDG progress at country level. Figure 1 presents a simplified illustration of the possible milestones in graphic form.

117. With the SDGs becoming the main focus of country programming, it would be useful if the next MTP contained a chapter on FAO and the SDGs that provided the corporate narrative on how FAO interprets the SDGs through its food and agriculture mandate and core functions.

118. The SO synthesis report (FAO, 2019a: para. 142) lists various guidance materials on how to incorporate the SDGs into FAO's work, however these materials contain numerous narratives – the 17 SDGs, the five SOs, the five principles and 20 interconnected actions, as well as the 12 focus areas (for resource mobilization) – which, while not mutually contradicting, create ambiguities as to what needs to be done by FAO and its partners. Furthermore, the Evaluation Team's discussions with FAO staff showed low awareness of these guidance materials and led to questions on who developed them, whether there was wide consultation and whether they had been well disseminated.

Figure 1: Progression of investments towards the 2030 target – a 10-year perspective
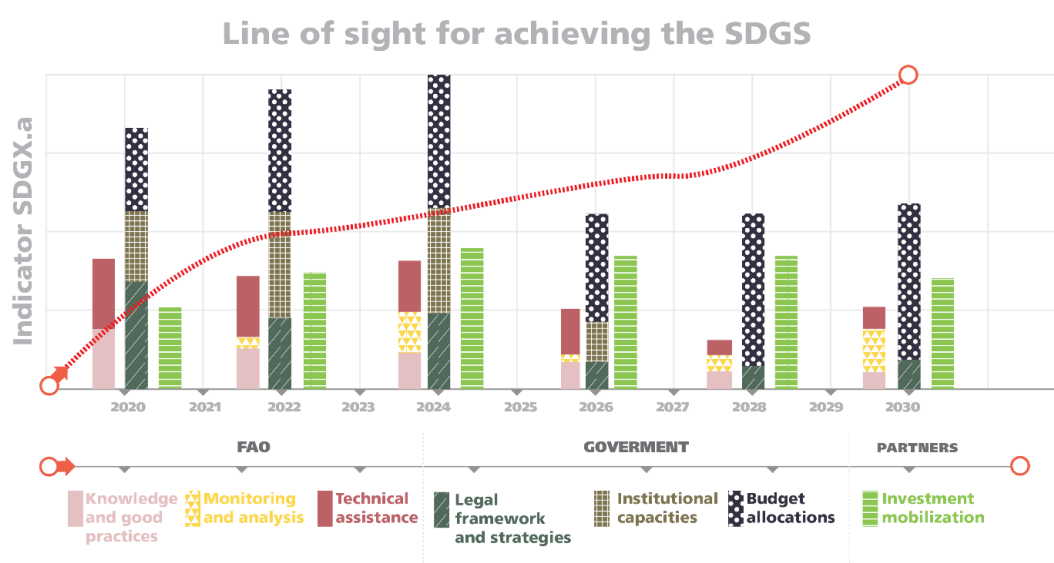
119. The evaluation notes the potential usefulness of some FAO's guidance products, such as Transforming Food and Agriculture to Achieve the SDGs: 20 interconnected actions to guide decision-makers (FAO, 2018h), which knits the many sectors of agriculture and rural development together with broad national development themes linked to SDG targets. An Illustration of this framework is provided in Figure 2.[23]

120. Without promoting any specific approach, the evaluation notes the following merits of using an "interconnected actions framework":

- It uses language that is intuitively understandable by external partners and stakeholders, rather than FAO's internal SO/SP language.
- It reinforces the principle of interconnected actions and how each action contributes to multiple SDGs.
- It helps to identify four or five big programme areas for FAO support at country level: productivity, resource sustainability, inclusion and equity, resilience and governance issues in food and agriculture.
- It helps to map other key actors that must be engaged for the actions to succeed, as well as their principal roles and scale of their contribution relative to FAO.
- It helps to cluster country programmes and projects around the actions and types of change to which they directly contribute, which can inform portfolio analysis.

121. The evaluation notes that the 2030 Agenda has implications for FAO's delivery model at the country level and calls for an appropriate balance between the core technical and knowledge production functions, channelling these into programme results. FAO's leadership will need to weigh the emerging demands at country level and the intensive process commitments of the United Nations Cooperation Framework (UNCF) against FAO's capacity to engage without sacrificing its core technical and normative functions. At the same time, the evaluation believes that FAO's engagement in the 2030 Agenda accords it a lead role in establishing the centrality of food and agriculture in achieving the SDGs, identifying appropriate actions and using the SDG framework more as a common language for monitoring progress. Thus, the evaluation advises the appropriate contextualization of FAO's engagement and role in achieving the SDGs, and using SDGs as a monitoring framework for FAO's recommended actions towards sustainable and resilient food systems, livelihoods and ecosystems.

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[23] Another perspective is offered in Appendix 11.

Figure 2: A representation of programme portfolios linked to SDGs, as proposed by the 20 interconnected actions formulated by FAO

Readiness for United Nations Reform

Finding 15: **The implications of United Nations Reform and the evolving United Nations development system structure and system-wide response to the SDGs are unclear to decentralized offices, as well as in headquarters. Formal corporate guidance is lacking on this major development.**

122. This evaluation noted in its interactions with decentralized offices that although the United Nations Reform process has begun, indications are that FAO is not ready to engage effectively because of a lack of clarity and limited staff capacity in Country Offices. Country staff say they lack adequate guidance on how to interpret FAO's role (including as custodian agency) and how to support countries on the specific indicators prioritized by them. In at least one country in Asia, discussions on the new CPF and UNSDCF are set to begin shortly, but so far, there has been no discussion with partners or the government in question on prioritization, nor any guidance from the Regional Office or headquarters. In contrast, in another Asian country, there is strong national commitment and support for the SDGs, though the UNSDCF is being developed with scant consultation with government.

123.   The evaluation's observations confirm the findings of an OIG review of FAO's readiness to implement the 2030 Agenda (conducted in July 2018) (FAO, 2018i), which observed a lack of consistency in the collective understanding of FAO's main roles with regard to the 2030 Agenda, a lack of clarity on what was expected from Country Office management and a lack of clarity on the impact of the impending United Nations Reform on FAO's role and configuration, which could potentially alter its contribution to the SDGs.

124.   The FAOR survey showed that the Results Framework facilitates the incorporation of SDGs into CPF planning and reporting, but that the process of monitoring and reporting on SDGs was not clear. Several participants noted the need for urgent guidance on UN Reform and support on the SDGs. More than 90 percent identified a need for some level of support on the SDGs and engaging in the UNSDCF processes. The specific areas for support identified include:

- **Priority setting:** analytical support to better understand which SDGs to focus on given the resource implications and engagement bandwidth; guidance on mainstreaming the SDGs into sectoral plans and supporting ministries of planning and line ministries;

- **Technical support:** clear narratives for Country and Regional Offices on how food and agriculture contribute to the SDGs; piloting engagement in a few countries and sharing practices on regional platforms;

- **Operational guidance:** capacity development on indicators, measuring investment impact; implementing partnerships around the SDGs; supporting voluntary national reporting processes.

125.   Despite the swift pace of developments associated with the 2030 Agenda since 2017, no comprehensive guidance has emerged from headquarters to help FAORs deal with it. Even the draft biennial work programme 2020–2021 does not elaborate on how FAO plans to strengthen its own capacity to support countries in their SDG processes. Although new guidelines on the UNSDCF (UNSDG, 2019) have been recently disseminated by the Office of Support to Decentralized Offices (OSD) and OSP, there would be merit in including a comprehensive addendum that fleshes out FAO's strategy to support member countries in formulating, prioritizing and implementing their SDG action plans for areas relevant to FAO's mandate and expertise.

126.   The daunting complexity of the SDGs and the UNSDCF strategy of inter-sectoral and multi-agency programming also requires FAO to improve its engagement in country-level partnerships with other UN agencies, as well as with the private sector. The decentralized offices noted that partnerships have been difficult to implement, as FAO's procedures for procurement and transfer of funds to implementing partners are deemed far more cumbersome than those of other agencies. For FAO to give money to other UN agencies is very difficult. Until operations between agencies are simplified and/or harmonized, formal partnership initiatives may see little success.

127.   The evaluation also noted a degree of scepticism in some quarters as to whether and when the UNSDCF and UN Reform will actually take off. Also unclear was the extent of donor buy-in and engagement and the likelihood of pooled contributions for the UNSDCF. While things are still somewhat fluid, there is a risk that if FAO (especially the Country Offices) does not proactively engage in the early stages, getting food and agriculture on the UNSDCF agenda will be far more difficult.

128.   Meanwhile, some examples of FAO's engagement with regard to the SDG processes can be noted. For instance, in Sudan, one of six countries in which such exercises have begun, FAO made good use of the United Nations Secretary-General's Joint SDG Fund[24] to develop joint proposals with other United Nations agencies and received much support from headquarters (from the Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division and the Office of the Chief Statistician) to help the government build capacity for prioritization, monitoring and evaluation, and voluntary national reviews.

129.   Taking these aspects into account, the evaluation notes that FAO needs to consider three specific actions: (1) a corporate SDG support plan for Members, endorsed by the governing body;[25] (2) a clearly articulated and appropriately resourced support mechanism to enable and backstop the frontline (FAORs) in effective engagement in crucial phases of UNSDCF preparation to ensure the rightful placement of food and agriculture on the response agenda; and (3) a dedicated SDG coordination unit at headquarters, to steer FAO engagement.[26]

130.   As mentioned, FAO needs to calibrate its engagement in the 2030 Agenda based on its fixed resources, leverage its technical knowledge and leadership on sustainable food and agriculture, and compensate for its weaker country-level structures with effective partnerships with agencies that are better positioned to mobilize and manage field-level programmes in several countries. For FAO, therefore, it is more important to make sure that the Organization has the minimum threshold of technical and programmatic capacities organized into multidisciplinary teams, so as to: (1) steer the formulation of the UNCF and CPFs that establish the pathways and key actions needed to achieve the SDGs relevant to FAO's mandate and expertise; and (2) assist key government partners in investment mobilization, monitoring and troubleshooting to adapt to implementation challenges, providing technical expertise in critical areas that need attention to achieve the stated goals. Beyond this, FAO's engagement in implementation will be a function of its ability to mobilize the right levels of field expertise and financing for programmes and to establish the right partnerships with agencies better positioned for programme implementation.

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[24] The United Nations Secretary-General created the UN Joint SDG Fund for UN Agencies to use to develop proposals for support to countries on SDG planning and implementation arrangements (UNSDG, n.d.)

[25] For 2020, some extraordinary measures may need to be put in place.

[26] Some actions outlined in this paragraph are explored in more detail in the appendices, to support further deliberation by FAO management, without being prescriptive.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

Adequacy of the delivery structure

Conclusion 1. Management structures introduced with the Strategic Framework were appropriate to promoting an SP approach to translate FAO's technical work into contributions at country level. They have, indeed, generated more multidisciplinary work across the technical departments at headquarters – a notable achievement considering the complexity of the change and limited timeframe involved. They have been less effective in transforming FAO's delivery in the field, which is a concern, as FAO's performance is primarily measured at this level.

131.   Structural and operational arrangements to implement the matrix model focused mainly on the headquarters level, setting out responsibilities and working arrangements between SP management teams and Technical Units. The creation of dedicated SP teams at headquarters (drawn from the existing resources of technical units) promoted a greater level of interdisciplinary, combining various technical areas in headquarters into more multidisciplinary approaches under the strategic programme architecture.

132.   Unlike the headquarters level, the matrix structure did not percolate sufficiently to the decentralized levels. Even though the Strategic Framework aimed to strengthen results at country level, Country and Sub-regional Offices were largely left out of the matrix structure. Sub-regional Offices had no defined role in relation to the SPs. The SP teams in the Regional Offices could not discharge their strategic coordination roles due to their multiple responsibilities and lack of capacity relative to their large geographical coverage areas. With a role largely focused on implementing the Regional Initiatives, Regional Offices unable to act as effective pivot points between headquarters and Country Offices.

133.   There have been discrepancies between corporate workplans aligned with the Strategic Framework and country programmes aimed at capturing national priorities, a disarticulation inherent to corporate results frameworks, which always focus on core results that are relevant to the Organization as a whole and which are not intended to be comprehensive pictures of everything achieved. SPs' emphasis on ensuring that country and regional planning targets are formally aligned with the Results Framework, rather than enhancing FAO's programmatic approaches and building on FAO's technical excellence, has not enhanced the vertical integration of programmes.

134.   The fact that SP teams do not cover everything that is planned at country level has limited their utility as the main point of reference for the various delivery levels. The large share of country programme delivery funded by voluntary contributions has not been fully reflected in corporate plans and reports and continues to be implemented outside the sphere of influence of SPs.

Conclusion 2. A lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities has hampered SP teams' ability to fully take the lead on the new programmatic approach across FAO. The primacy given to aligning programmes with corporate results goes against the intention that SPs would service country programmes. At the decentralized level, tight human and financial resources and multiple responsibilities have prevented SPs from evolving into strong pillars of programme management that enhance delivery quality at country level. Regional Initiatives could have been useful vehicles for translating the strategic vision at regional level; instead,

they are generally perceived as standalone instruments with loose synergies to country programmes.

135. Amid growing and ever more complex national demand, owing to FAO's resource constraints, the Regional and Sub-Regional Offices lack the critical mass of technical expertise and appropriate skills required to match the size and composition of project portfolios and the geographic scope of their respective regions. Consequently, they struggle to deliver effective results. Resource mobilization capacities in decentralized offices are not commensurate with the degree of decentralization of donor funding, leaving gaps in FAO's resource mobilization effectiveness. The absence of mechanisms to support the coherent and effective management of capacity at the Sub-regional and Regional Office and headquarters levels amplifies this weakness.

136. Opinions remain divided on the value addition and differentiating contribution of Regional Initiatives to country results. Bar some exceptions and some regions, they are generally perceived as standalone instruments of loose synergistic value to country programmes. Many Regional Initiatives lack clear programmatic structure and strong regional rationale as well as the necessary resource mobilization mechanisms for upscaling.

137. Regional Initiatives add value when they act as mechanisms to advocate for and enhance mobilization around priorities that have a clear regional dimension that resonates with country-level activities. The rationale for typical Regional Initiatives may include a mix of the following elements, with adjustments as appropriate, based on regional characteristics:

- **Efficiency and scalability**: Addressing a common issue through pooled expertise
- **Transboundary response**: Offering transboundary cooperation mechanisms
- **Regional governance jurisdiction**: Supporting the mandate of a regional structure
- **Expertise location**: When support capacities reside in a regional centre of excellence

Appropriateness of programme management systems

Conclusion 3. The Strategic Framework provided a structure for the management of FAO's country programmes under a unified results framework. Although there has been progressive reflection of country priorities in corporate workplans and reports, there are inherent trade-offs between an emphasis on reporting at the aggregate level and generating feedback to programme managers for learning. There has been inadequate investment in staff and systems for effective monitoring and qualitative analysis of delivery and performance at country level. FAO's delivery model, based on projects, has not evolved sufficiently to allow for a more programmatic management approach.

138. FAO has not yet fully managed to adopt a delivery model suited to multi-sector programmes that enhance cohesion across its large project-based portfolios and that leverage its strong partnerships with governments and development partners. FAO's high dependence on voluntary contributions and fragmented resource mobilization and donor engagement nurture a project-based approach that is skewed toward small projects rather than large programmes, resulting in disproportionate transaction costs and few tangible impacts. Although FAO senior managers believe that country programmes need to become more programmatic and strategic, the information systems used for work planning do not offer adequate instruments for planning programmatically. There is also a lack of clarity on how to define and put these approaches into practice. SP teams at all levels need to better steer FAO's programme design and resource mobilization in line with its programmatic priorities, and offer incentives for COs to shift from small project-based to more strategic resource mobilization strategies.

139.   Work planning and reporting systems have improved in terms of integrating FAO's work at headquarters, regional and country level. However, the main focus of the biennial work-planning process has been to allow structured reporting of the Organization's results at the corporate output level. Planning is excessively oriented towards regular budget allocations, while a significant proportion of FAO's technical/normative work and programming is funded from extra-budgetary resources and remains poorly reflected in planning and reporting processes.

140.   FAO's information management systems are fragmented across various ERPs. Collectively, they generate an enormous amount of information, though this is sub-optimally used to document lessons learned from implementation and to improve programmatic design and implementation. To provide insights and learning, data collected on programme results need to be analysed qualitatively, with the support of programme teams. FAO has not invested sufficiently in an effective institutional monitoring function that enables qualitative assessment, boosts learning and gives feedback to enhance programme performance and the effectiveness of results. Monitoring is not given the appropriate level of importance and emphasis. It is unclear to what extent governance mechanisms, such as the CPMB and PIMB, conduct qualitative assessments of Strategic Framework implementation and development effectiveness to enable the regular review and adjustment of FAO's strategic orientation.

141.   FAO's significant investment in collecting data on corporate outcome-level results through the biennial COA, though a markedly positive step, has so far has not served its purpose in full, as the results of these assessments have only been used to a limited extent. Given COA's focus on monitoring SDG indicators at country level, it could eventually provide useful information for the preparatory (UNCCA) processes for UNSDCF discussions.

142.   FAO lacks project management systems and tools to track and manage its large and fragmented portfolio of projects. It needs to create feedback loops to support timely intervention and manage delivery risk. Also, much-needed instruments, steady staff and certified capacities for programme management support are not in place.

Effectiveness of administrative and operational procedures

Conclusion 4. FAO's administrative systems and procedures have placed significant constraints on the effective delivery of FAO's mission. An administrative environment that reflects a centralized and control-oriented culture contradicts the vision of a decentralized, efficient and responsive organization, creates the perception of a lack of trust in the front lines and inhibits initiative and innovation.

143.   Recent policy decisions have led to cost reductions and efficiency improvements over the years. However, as an unintended consequence, the new practices and requirements have also put constraints on effectiveness of delivery, which have affected the agility of FAO Country Office delivery in the various regions. They have thus engendered significant reputational risk for FAO among partners and counterparts, revealing the Organization to be cumbersome and slow. There are numerous illustrations of consultant recruitment, travel and procurement processes, in particular, hampering programme delivery and quality. Administrative regulations aimed at reinforcing ex ante controls, formulated without sufficient prior consultation and feedback for practicality, have forged a perceived lack of trust in the frontline. In many instances, managers lack the authority to make decisions, when clearly established accountability could enable more delegation to the frontline and enhance efficiency.

144. Current systems and procedures raise questions as to FAO's fitness for purpose for the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Reform. The frontline must be enabled and empowered, as this is critical to FAO's effective engagement. There needs to be a comprehensive review of all processes that require multiple pre-clearances, as well as assessments of the trade-offs between efficiency gains and effectiveness loss. Some delegation to the frontline is necessary, allowing managers to exercise discretion with due justification and accountability.

Management of change

Conclusion 5. The introduction of the Strategic Framework was not a change at the margins, but a major transformation of how FAO intended to deliver on its mission and account for results. The attention paid to managing change was not commensurate with the scale and complexity of the change in question.

145. FAO did not put in place an Organization-wide change-management process to accompany its extensive six-year reform, but rather adopted an approach of "learning by doing". While this gave FAO the flexibility to introduce changes quickly, learn and improve, it also risked not securing sufficient buy-in from everyone in the Organization. The development of a change-management strategy for human resources, currently underway, is a good start, as many of the changes and their impacts relate to HR issues.

146. The absence of periodic employee climate surveys denied the Organization the opportunity for unfiltered feedback from employees about the changes – what was working and what should have been improved or changed. The changes were implemented with varying degrees of consistency and with insufficient explicit oversight of the overall reform process. The absence of an Organization-wide change-management process also meant that FAO did not spell out the kind of organizational culture it wanted to support the change, or build on the prior culture-change strategy that had been developed.

Validity of the Results Framework structure and indicators

Conclusion 6. FAO's Results Framework, in its current form, does not sufficiently delineate the contribution pathways and intermediate milestones that translate FAO's outputs into collectively owned outcomes. Abstract, high-level outcomes do not adequately reflect normative contributions, while indicators focus on production rather than on uptake of knowledge. Results remain focused on FAO's outputs and do not sufficiently emphasize or specify the principal contributions or levels of effort and accountability required of FAO and its key partners, particularly governments and donors, to achieve national outcomes.

147. A fundamental design issue is that SO outcome statements are too high level compared with the substance of FAO's engagement. This has hampered the matching of tangible results on the ground with outcomes at the reporting stage, hindering FAO's capacity to report adequately on its results. Many results have never been reported and finding evidence to demonstrate outcomes based on outputs has been difficult. These high-level outcomes have not facilitated reporting on specific normative achievements, such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR) (FAO, 2019h) or Codex Alimentarius (FAO and WHO, 2019), as they are too specific to be reported at outcome level.

148. The linkage is weak between the duration and level of effort presented in FAO's outputs and the scale, resources and time required to achieve targeted outcomes. More importantly, while outcomes are recognized as joint responsibilities of FAO and its partners, FAO's outcome-level responsibilities are not specified. Missing from the indicators are FAO and partner contributions to financing and investment in sustainable food and agriculture systems.

149. The Results Framework's emphasis on aggregate reporting lacks a qualitative dimension, offering few insights into the progress of change and the longer-term impacts of FAO's work in terms of livelihoods and food systems. The results do not tell the story of how and where FAO has improved food systems, livelihoods, resilience and sustainability, or made a meaningful difference to ecosystem or environmental health.

150. While due effort was made in the Strategic Framework to maintain and ring-fence regular budget resources for corporate technical and normative activities, normative work is not captured strongly enough in the five SOs. There is a disconnect between the high quality of FAO's knowledge products and the efforts made on knowledge capitalization. Results indicators are oriented more towards the production of knowledge products rather than their uptake and translation into capacities, policies and transformative investments associated with development outcomes that will improve food systems and livelihoods.

151. FAO has invested in COAs to track and report results at the outcome level. However, the full potential of these assessments has not been realized, due to insufficient use of the information for analysis, programme improvement and development effectiveness.

152. With countries increasingly aligning their results with the 2030 Agenda and with FAO's Results Framework aligning outcomes with SDG indicators, fleshing out these arrangements has become more necessary. FAO also needs to mark appropriate milestones on the path to achieving the SDG targets affected by FAO's outputs and partnerships.

153. The Results Framework has been refined and improved over successive biennia, including through the adoption of SDG targets and indicators as the measure of change. However, there is no theory of change or narrative to show the progression of the key elements of change required to achieve the SDG targets over the period to 2030. The Results Framework needs milestones to show this progression, from FAO output to uptake in policy, investment and programmes, with monitoring to assess FAO's influence on SDG progress at country level.

154. Recent efforts to redefine FAO's work areas towards the SDGs and the Organization's distinct contributions to them, are notable, especially the alignment of the Results Framework to the SDG targets. FAO's recent publication on the SDGs and proposed 20 interconnected actions (FAO, 2018h) illustrates how FAO's definition of its work areas may evolve. This approach embraces new thinking on interdependent development issues explicitly related to the SDGs. Other efforts initiated by the Resources Mobilization team – specifically, the creation of a business development portfolio – also demonstrate that the Organization has recognized the need to define concrete, issue-based areas of work that are more marketable.

Readiness for United Nations Reform

Conclusion 7. FAO's Strategic Results Framework initiative has largely been focused internally to date. Yet, it is not well placed to adapt to the two major changes on the horizon: the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform. These will warrant further adjustments and a strengthening of processes and structures to facilitate FAO's effective engagement.

155. The implications of UN Reform, as well as the evolving UNDS structure and the system-wide response to the SDGs, are unclear to both the decentralized offices and headquarters. Knowledge on this subject resides with a few individuals and has not been developed into formal corporate guidance.

156. FAO is conscious of the need to redefine its strategy in Country Offices in light of the UNSDCF, but there is currently no evidence of a concerted Organization-wide approach or

guidance in this regard involving the SP teams, technical divisions and decentralized offices. In particular, FAO lacks the necessary agility and capacity for deployment at country level, where the needs are emerging, and runs the risk of stymying its ability to effectively articulate and position sustainable food and agriculture as central to attaining the SDGs.

157. There is an urgent need to develop an Organization-wide common understanding of FAO's role in and contribution to helping countries implement their SDG plans – a common narrative on how and where FAO's expertise contributes to the various SDGs, how FAO seeks to define success for its Members and for itself, and how FAO seeks to measure its contributions through 2030.

158. Following on from this, there should be clear and convincing guidance for the frontline on how to ensure the centrality of food and agriculture in achieving the SDGs and a clearly articulated and resourced support mechanism to enable and backstop the frontline (FAORs) in effective engagement in UNSDCF formulation.

3.2   Recommendations

Rating criteria	Impact			Urgency (years)		
Recommendation	High	Medium	Low	< 0.5	0.5–1	1–2
1. Engaging with the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform	🟥			🟥		
2. Updating FAO results framework	🟥				🟧	
3. Aligning FAO structures	🟥					🟩
4. Adjusting FAO capacities	🟥					🟩
5. Enhancing programme management		🟧			🟧	
6. Establishing monitoring and learning		🟧			🟧	
7. Improving administrative support		🟧		🟥		
8. Managing change		🟧				🟩

159. Based on the preceding conclusions, the Evaluation Team makes the following interconnected recommendations to inform FAO's deliberations on the next version of the Strategic Framework for 2020–2030, to coincide with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Per the Programme Committee's request, a red-amber-green colour code is assigned to each recommendation to rate its relative importance and urgency. The rating code thus represents an index-based gauge of the two criteria, with red the most urgent and important. Recommendations are, therefore, presented in an order that follows a logical sequence, aligned with the evaluation's findings and conclusions, rather than in order of importance.

160. Per the request of senior management, the evaluation proposed a number of specific suggestions in appendices to complement or illustrate the following recommendations. Suggested actions should be understood as possible practical solutions for implementing the recommendations, for review and discussion within the Secretariat; they are by no means prescriptive.

Recommendation 1. Develop a clear strategy and action plan for FAO engagement with the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform. A large-scale country-level effort will be required in the coming months to influence the UNSDCF. FAO needs to be able to respond to these requirements, bearing in mind FAO's limited resources. The evaluation team suggests the following actions:

a) Elaborate and disseminate an Organization-wide strategy and action plan articulating FAO's engagement with the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform. This should aim to ensure a commonly owned understanding of:

- how and where FAO's expertise contributes to the various SDGs
- what role FAO plays and how it supports countries in implementing their SDG plans
- how FAO intends to adjust its focus from funding to financing
- how FAO seeks to define success for its members and for itself
- how FAO seeks to measure its contributions over the 10-year horizon to 2030
- the synergies and trade-offs between SDGs

b) Establish an SDG coordination unit under DDG-P, tasked with ensuring the provision of agile and comprehensive guidance and support to Country Offices on how to ensure the centrality of food and agriculture in achieving the SDGs. This unit should coordinate immediate action to ensure appropriate country support, particularly for those Members that have prepared national SDG plans and those that are lagging on indicators where FAO leads support. These may include:

- issuing guidance to country offices, including on approaches for developing 10-year roadmaps guided by SDG targets, as well as progressive biennial milestones to steer biennial priorities, workplans, resources and targets at output level;
- forming a country support capacity for SDG implementation based on needs, to guide country engagement, in particular in the initial preparatory phases of the UNSDCF;[27] and
- formulating a capacity development plan for relevant profiles, as appropriate.

c) Secure earmarked resources (such as the Multidisciplinary Fund resources previously available to SP teams) for SDG support, under the management of the SDG coordination unit.

Recommendation 2. Enhance the suitability of the Results Framework as a programmatic structure for guiding FAO's engagement at country level by setting more tangible programmatic objectives related to development issues that demonstrate FAO's main contributions to SDG achievement. This process should clarify the results chain of FAO's normative work on global public goods and development objectives and identify relevant indicators to spur the results-oriented management of programmes and monitor FAO's contributions against SDG indicators, alongside those of other key development stakeholders.

161. FAO's results framework needs to go beyond mere alignment to SDGs and integrate the SDGs further into the FAO programme structure, so as to facilitate the integration of FAO programmes into the UNSDCF response plans agreed with countries and to improve opportunities for effective partnerships and funding mobilization.

162. The new Strategic Framework narrative should elaborate on the pathways of change, drawing on FAO's leadership on initiatives for sustainable, resilient food systems, livelihoods and ecosystems. These would provide a basis for setting new intermediary outcomes in FAO's results framework, based on priority development issues, along the model of the interconnected actions framework. This could act as a broad template of engagement at country level and serve to make FAO's normative work more visible.

163. With the exception of the normative areas of FAO's work, the results framework should use SDG frameworks to track the progression of results over a 10-year period (2020–2030). Formulating a roadmap with progressive milestones to show a progression from FAO

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[27] See appendix 6 for further suggestions.

outputs to national policy uptake, investment mobilization and programme implementation would be useful for guiding programmatic and resourcing priorities and would help set biennial targets.

164. The Results Framework should clearly delineate the respective contributions and levels of effort expected of FAO, governments, donors and financial institutions to achieving the results for which they are collectively responsible. These narratives will also guide FAO's engagement in the UNSDCF and in planning its contributions and will measure its results based on a realistic contextual understanding.

165. With the magnitude of resources needed for SDG financing, it is also important to have investment mobilization as a metric in the Results Framework. This would be a more meaningful indicator of Country Offices performance than those used to date and a means of promoting a culture of managing for results.

166. COAs should serve to measure and analyse FAO's contribution and influence at country level in terms of policy impact, institutional changes, investment/budget impacts and upscaling of good practices that contribute to the achievement of nationally owned SDG targets. Investments in COAs should be supplemented by qualitative analysis to explain the translation of outputs delivered by FAO into outcomes and identify factors contributing to or impeding the achievement of milestones, and the principal onus of responsibility for those, using CPFs as mutual accountability frameworks delineating mutual accountabilities.

167. Processes leading to a rethink of the Results Framework and related performance indicators should engage all levels of the FAO delivery chain and involve representatives of key programme, technical and operational functions.

Recommendation 3. Develop delivery structures to adopt a bottom-up logic and make FAO fit for purpose at Country Level, including for the 2030 Agenda.

168. Servicing FAO's country-level commitments, where most of the results accountability and extra-budgetary resources reside, should drive the priorities of corporate planning, except for FAO's mandated global/normative areas of work. The evaluation accordingly suggests enhancing the effectiveness of the matrix structure to support country-level work through the following actions:

   a) Establish stronger vertical lines of communication and engagement along functional lines (programme, technical and operational), connecting all levels of the structure (Country, Sub-regional, Regional Offices and headquarters) to enhance support and the reporting of main the functions to be performed at each level. While the thrust of this vertical engagement is to foster an orientation towards bottom-up planning and top-down support, it should also allow Country Offices to influence the thinking and understanding of headquarters-based and other teams on how to achieve the centrality of food and agriculture, leveraging country experiences.

   b) Establish and/or enhance multidisciplinary programme teams (MPTs) in Sub-Regional Offices and task them with supporting the frontline with programme planning, monitoring and technical backstopping on demand. These teams should have a direct line of communication to and engagement with headquarters-based technical teams for support. Programmes should generally not entail direct field-level implementation by headquarters units, with the possible exception of specific global flagship and normative products and services that can be best delivered from headquarters.

   c) Establish MPTs at headquarters to lead the issue-based programmes specified under the SOs. These MPTs should comprise a small number of programme managers and

programme-relevant technical experts from relevant technical units and existing programmatic capacity (SP teams). FAO technical units dedicating a relatively small fraction of their capacity to these programmatic teams should continue to devote a substantial part of their capacity to FAO's normative mission, while facilitating the programmatic integration of the latter into country and regional programmes. Programme managers in MPTs would lead the ideation, guidance and horizontal coordination needed to support country programmes and coordinate with relevant support units on resource mobilization, partnerships, South–South cooperation and other cross-cutting functions.

d) RPLs and their teams should manage and implement regional programmes based on priorities that have a clear regional dimension and play an essential role in coordinating intraregional best-practice exchanges between MPTs. In the country programme support delivery structure, Regional Offices would maintain primary responsibility for operational and administrative support, in close collaboration with relevant units in headquarters. Successful Regional Initiatives and programmes could inspire the formulation of programmatic frameworks at sub-regional level and serve to enhance FAO programme's strategic positioning and potential for donor and partner buy-in.

e) Considering the limited staff resources available in Country Offices, a sub-regional or regional-level support facility for resource mobilization and partnership oversight should be established in close cooperation with the programme units.

f) Grant country offices more direct access to seed funding, either from the TCP or other sources of unearmarked funding, to facilitate the incorporation of FAO programmatic offerings into their work and to optimize their utilization of the revamped MPT structures.

169. Figure 3 illustrates the above recommended structure to support a more country-oriented delivery structure.

Figure 3: Suggested structure for supporting more country-oriented delivery at FAO
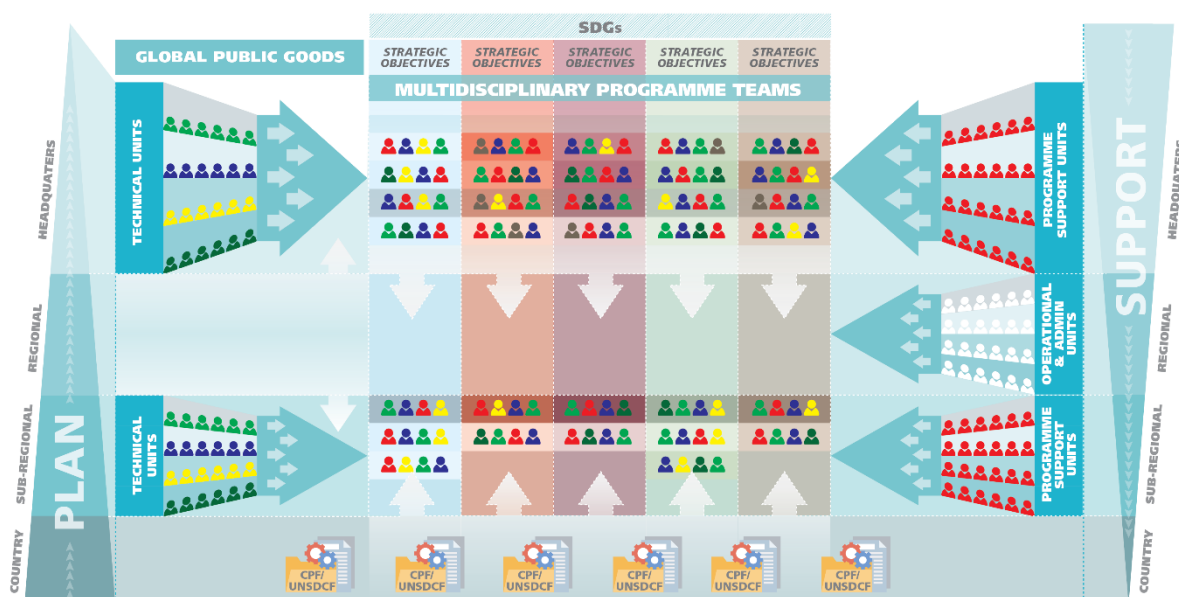
Recommendation 4. To ensure fitness for purpose, FAO needs to establish mechanisms to ensure its staff profiles match needs at all levels and to continue developing staff capacities to adjust to changing demands. The following actions are suggested in this regard:

a) Undertake a comprehensive review of the skill mixes and capacity development needs in regional and sub-regional offices, clarify the profiles needed to enhance the effectiveness of FAO's engagement at country level and adjust to the development profiles and capacities of host countries. Capacities to support policy development or to influence investment are examples of the skills that may need investment.

b) Ensure Country Office leadership is fit for purpose and that the required expertise is available. Following the comprehensive review, FAO should identify the different talents it requires, specify tasks accordingly and, in particular, distinguish clearly between technical, managerial and leadership functions. Important functions to be strengthened at decentralized levels include regional results and resource planning, programme portfolio management, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management, communications and advocacy, and partnerships and resource mobilization. The profiles of the FAORs and Country Office staff will also need to be reviewed and both incumbents and new Representatives will need to be assessed and selected against these new standards.

c) Revamp FAO's mobility and decentralization policy. Staff mobility, when properly implemented, helps to ensure FAO has access to technical expertise. Staff postings should thus be based on a systematic analysis of the profiles needed in various office locations. Staffing should, for example, take into account the prioritization of specialized expertise in headquarters or tailor expertise to the priorities of a (sub-)region. To complement mobility efforts, FAO should identify posts in headquarters, Regional and Sub-regional Offices (professional and administrative staff) that are no longer needed, for instance, in view of the restructuring proposed under Recommendation 3, or that have been kept vacant for long periods, to strengthen capacities in MPTs in Sub-regional Offices and/or increase the allocation of non-staff resources (seed money) to Country Offices.[28]

Recommendation 5. Reinforce the programme management function in FAO headquarters to provide strategic orientation and promote programmatic approaches.

170. In light of the new challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform and to be better prepared for the formulation of a new Strategic Framework, it is recommended that FAO further consolidate its programme management function by amalgamating all of the functions that influence FAO's programme quality, namely, the SPs and other programme support functions, strategic planning and monitoring. This consolidated programme function would lead on a number of important tasks, including:

   i. Coordinate and guide the articulation of FAO's role in supporting countries to achieve the SDGs, in close consultation with the technical and operational teams;

   ii. Coordinate, in consultation with technical teams, the development of a new programme portfolio architecture based on FAO's main contributions to the 2030 Agenda, to inspire country programmes and increase readability for external interlocutors;

   iii. Oversee decentralized office programme functions with a direct line of reporting on programme management aspects,[29] including the provision of guidance and support to

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[28] The resource implications of this recommendations are discussed in appendix 12.
[29] This implies that Regional Programme Leaders will report to the DDG-P to ensure appropriate vertical coordination of programme orientations.

decentralized offices in building programmes, monitoring results and undertaking programme performance assessments, including on qualitative aspects;

    iv.   Oversee integrated strategic planning across all sources of funding and financing in close coordination with operational teams;

    v.   Promote and monitor the appropriate integration of FAO programmes within effective partnerships and collaborations, as a contribution to building FAO's capacity to guide investment strategies. This includes considering possible partnerships with the private sector to facilitate the shift from "funding to financing", based on FAO's technical value proposition.

Recommendation 6. Establish corporate qualitative monitoring and management learning functions.

171.   To bridge the current gaps in institutional monitoring and management learning, FAO needs new and supplementary levels of qualitative analysis, as well as matching systems that support measurement and reporting to improve corporate performance, as calibrated by the externally driven 2030 Agenda. The following actions are suggested:

    a)   Establish a Strategic Programme Monitoring and Review function under DDG-P, to oversee and champion monitoring at the corporate level, supported by a more operational qualitative programme monitoring and an analysis coordination taskforce with terms of reference and a work programme. In line with FAO's mandate to guide the Organization towards effective programme management, a structure is required to ensure that knowledge generated by the programmes is qualitatively analysed and used to for the continuous refinement of programmes towards long-term results.[30]

    b)   Necessary investments should be budgeted at headquarters and in Regional/Sub-regional offices for a minimum requisite threshold of human resources and certified skills to support qualitative programme monitoring and analysis, to undertake periodic strategic reviews of portfolios and strategies, to strengthen learning and feedback loops, and to provide valuable insights to top management to enhance delivery effectiveness.

    c)   Revise FAO management information systems into a new set that is fit for purpose, to serve the needs of programme managers in relation to planning, monitoring and reporting. The integrated set of ERP systems should enable: (1) the planning of all FAO activities, whether funded from extra-budgetary sources or the regular budget; (2) the monitoring and analysis of activities, including qualitative analysis, for programme enhancement; and (3) reporting for accountability purposes.

    d)   Consistent with the proposed improvements to the Results Framework, the evaluation also recommends improving FAO's numerical indicators, also by introducing qualitative dimensions, to foster analysis that meets the needs of programme managers.

Recommendation 7. Improve the efficiency of administrative procedures to increase FAO's agility in responding to country needs.

172.   To deliver on its core values, aspirations and commitment to be a best-in-class organization and partner of choice, FAO needs to make its enabling administrative environment fit for purpose, using relevant benchmarks. Administrative policies need to manage the trade-offs between efficiency and effectiveness. Consider the following actions, in particular:

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[30] A diagram suggesting how this could be structured is presented in appendix 5.

a) Enhance delegation of authority to the frontline. Revise administrative policies to increase the decision-making power of managers over issues of recruitment, travel or procurement, as appropriate. In particular, there should be greater delegation of authority to Regional Representatives (and, to some extent, Country Representatives) in key areas involving decentralized delivery, especially when it comes to consultant recruitment, procurement ceilings, resource mobilization and partnerships.[31]

b) Establish corresponding accountability measures to manage risks. Appropriate measures need to be put in place to ensure that managers with delegated authority are accountable for their decisions, using ex post controls to manage the risk of excessive deviation from recommended practices. Make managers responsible for ensuring gender and geographical balance in their administrative decisions. Entrust OHR with monitoring trends and reporting to the Head of the Operations Department for intervention in cases of abuse.

Recommendation 8. FAO should develop and implement a strategy to institutionalize good change-management practices in the Organization.

173. FAO, like all organizations in the United Nations System, has been undergoing change and will continue to do so. Leadership transition and the latest round of system reforms will require effective change management. It is recommended that FAO institutionalize good change-management practices in the Organization, in alignment with good practices and models.

a) Establish a small task force on change management to advise the Director-General and guide the development of a strategy and plan to institutionalize change-management practices in the Organization. There being no blueprint for change management, which can be very organization and context specific, FAO could follow the guidance soon to be published by the JIU and seek assistance from external experts and/or the United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge (UNLOCK). Lessons from practices from other organizations, as well as FAO's past experience, such as the Shared Services, can assist in the development of an Organization-wide change-management programme.

b) While OHR can be expected to play a key role in change management, managing change effectively is the responsibility of all managers in the Organization. It is critical that all employees in FAO are engaged in the process and that their views and concerns are solicited and incorporated into decisions and processes. The next biennial global survey (to be launched in 2019) presents an opportunity to solicit the views of employees, not only about administrative services, but also their experiences in the Organization and issues pertaining to FAO's culture.

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31 A list of specific, immediate actions that may rapidly increase FAO's agility is presented in appendix 4.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Findings of the FAOR survey

Appendix 2. Summary of findings from Regional Workshops

Appendix 3. COAs – further analysis

Appendix 4. Suggested actions for immediate implementation

Appendix 5. Possible structure for a Strategic Monitoring and Review Committee

Appendix 6. Recombining SP teams and Technical Units into issue-based SDG support teams

Appendix 7. Comprehensive SDG support strategy to be reflected in the next Strategic Results Framework

Appendix 8. FAO knowledge products and guidance on SDGs and the 2030 Agenda

Appendix 9. SDG2: FAO's gateway to addressing several SDGs

Appendix 10. Engaging in countries that have progressed in preparing for the SDGs –

the case of Bangladesh

Appendix 11. Perspectives on programme portfolio groupings

Appendix 12. Resource implications

Appendix 13. People interviewed

Appendices are available to download at http://www.fao.org/evaluation/en/

Annexes

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

Annexes are available to download at http://www.fao.org/evaluation/en/