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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

COUNCIL

Hundred and Sixty-fourth Session

6-10 July 2020¹

Report of the Joint Meeting of the 128th Session of the Programme Committee and the 180th Session of the Finance Committee (8, 12, 16 and 17 June 2020)

Executive Summary

The Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees brings to the attention of the Council its finding and recommendations on:

- a) Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-21;
- b) Programme Implementation Report 2018-19;
- c) Use of the Unspent Balance of the 2018-19 Biennial Appropriation;
- d) The GFFA 2020's call upon FAO's Governing Bodies "to support a process" for "the establishment of an International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture"; and
- e) Update on COVID-19 and its consequences for food security and food systems.

Suggested action by the Council

The Council is requested to endorse the findings and recommendations of the Joint Meeting.

Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

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¹ Rescheduled from 8-12 June 2020

Introductory Items

1. The Joint Meeting submitted its Report to the Council.
2. In addition to the Chairperson, Ms Imelda Smolcic Nijers (Uruguay) and H.E. (Mr) Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands), the Chairperson of the Programme Committee, the following representatives of Members were present:

| | |
|--|---|
| H.E. (Mr) Carlos Bernardo Cherniak (Argentina) | Mr Laith Obeidat (Jordan) ³ |
| Ms Lynda Hayden (Australia) | Mr Muhammad Rudy Khairudin Mohd Nor (Malaysia) |
| Mr Manash Mitra (Bangladesh) | Ms Traoré Halimatou Kone (Mali) |
| Mr Rodrigo Estrela de Carvalho (Brazil) | Mr Benito Santiago Jiménez Sauma (Mexico) |
| Ms Jennifer Fellows (Canada) | Mr Donald G. Syme (New Zealand) |
| Ms Tamara Villanueva (Chile) | Ms Tahirou Rahila Rabiou (Niger) |
| Mr NI Hongxing (China) | Mr Denis Cherednichenko (Russian Federation) ⁴ |
| Mr Haitham Abdelhady Elsayed Elshahat (Egypt) | Mr Sid Ahmed M. Alamain Hamid Alamain (Sudan) |
| H.E. (Ms) Zenebu Tadesse Woldetsadik (Ethiopia) ² | H.E. (Ms) Marie-Therese Sarch (United Kingdom) |
| H.E. (Ms) Delphine Borione (France) | Ms Jennifer Harhigh (United States of America) ⁵ |
| Mr Heiner Thofern (Germany) | Mr Kayoya Masuhwa (Zambia) |
| H.E. (Mr) Mohammad Hossein Emadi (Islamic Republic of Iran) | |
| Mr Toru Hisazome (Japan) | |

3. The Joint Meeting thanked the Director-General for his comprehensive statement and appreciated his leadership of the Organization in these very unprecedented times of the COVID-19 crisis.

I. Adoption of the Provisional Agenda⁶

4. The Joint Meeting Session was convened virtually on an exceptional basis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This followed the endorsement by the Council Members of the Director-General's proposal, pursuant to Rule XXV, paragraph 13 of the General Rules of the Organization, that each Council Committee be convened at the earliest opportunity by conducting its upcoming Session virtually, to consider matters that require urgent consideration and decision by the Council within the first half of the calendar year.
5. The Joint Meeting confirmed, pursuant to Rule VII of the rules of procedure of the Programme Committee and Finance Committee, respectively, that they agreed to the suspension of Rule II (5) of the PC rules of procedure and Rule II (4) of the rules of procedure of the FC, which require that sessions shall be held at the seat of the Organization.
6. The Chairperson informed Members that, should technical connection fail, the meeting would be suspended if the quorum was not reached.
7. The Joint Meeting requested FAO Management to update FAO's action plan to prevent and respond to Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Authority Abuse, in response to the findings of the 2019-2020 staff satisfaction survey and to report on progress to its session in November 2020.
8. The Joint Meeting adopted its Agenda.

² Mr Addisu Melkamu was designated to replace H.E. (Ms) Zenebu Tadesse Woldetsadik for part of the Joint Meeting

³ Mr Laith Obeidat was designated to replace H.E. (Mr) Fayez Khouri

⁴ Mr Denis Cherednichenko was designated to replace Mr Vladimir V. Kuznetsov

⁵ Ms Jennifer Harhigh was designated to replace Ms Emily Katkar

⁶ JM 2020.1/1; PC 128/INF/1; FC 180/INF/1 Rev.1

II. Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-21⁷

9. The Joint Meeting:

- a) reviewed the information in the *Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-21* which reaffirms the Director-General's vision of attaining zero hunger and improving the livelihoods of people through better production, better nutrition, better environment and a better life, noting the proposed adjustments remain within the overall approved budget level for 2020-21 of USD 1,005.6 million;
- b) welcomed the provision of the additional Information Note, expressed general support for the proposed organizational structure changes (Annex 1), but requested a clear predefinition of the reporting lines and further information on their impacts on programme delivery;
- c) appreciated a focus oriented on increasing efficiency, breaking the silos through reducing bureaucracy and improving flexibility to respond to emerging needs and priorities, through innovative approaches, emphasizing the need for further transparency and accountability, including on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative;
- d) noted a more modular and flexible structure proposed to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and cross-sectoral collaboration which allows an inclusive and agile FAO, while recognizing the need to preserve its technical capacities;
- e) noted that all Offices, Centres and Divisions would report to the Director-General, a Deputy Director-General, the Chief Economist or the Chief Scientist, and requested that further details on these reporting lines be provided, including the Deputy Directors-General and the Assistant Directors-General prior to the 164th Session of the Council;
- f) supported the disbanding of the Strategic Programme Management teams;
- g) welcomed the creation of the new Office of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to coordinate corporate engagement in the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review;
- h) emphasized the need to take into account priorities for all countries, in view of growing challenges to achieving food security and nutrition, recalling para. 70.k) of the Report of the 41st Session of the FAO Conference⁸;
- i) highlighted the need to continue supporting decentralized offices to ensure FAO's impact at country level notwithstanding the disbanding of the Office of Support to Decentralized Offices;
- j) requested Management to prioritize sustainable funding for the Office of the Inspector General within existing resources;
- k) acknowledged the importance of innovation, including all sustainable innovative approaches, use of digitalization in agriculture and new technologies, as one of the core priorities of FAO's Programme of Work and Budget (PWB), while continuing to promote sustainable development in all its three dimensions, economic, social and environmental;
- l) welcomed FAO's focus on sustainable food systems and expanding partnerships including with the private sector; while noting the revised distribution of the net appropriations by budgetary chapter as reflected in Table 3, the Joint Meeting requested a more detailed presentation of the budgetary shifts (Web Annex 4) and revised budgeted post establishment (Web Annex 3), to facilitate full understanding of and support to the proposed adjustments and sources of funding presented in Table 1;

⁷ CL 164/3; CL 164/3 Web Annexes 2-4; CL 164/3 Information Note 1

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/na421en/na421en.pdf>

- m) welcomed the proposals to establish the FAO/WHO Centre and increase funding to the FAO/IAEA Centre that reflects outstanding and ongoing collaboration between these agencies, including the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). These were timely, in light of the challenges posed by zoonotic disease to sustainable agriculture and food systems;
- n) looked forward to receiving a Concept Note of the FAO/WHO Centre that provided further information on the rationale, governance arrangements and modalities for the centre; welcomed the Director-General's willingness to consider how the Centre could support FAO's work on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR); and welcomed Management's confirmation that the resources and independence of the Codex Secretariat and the current Food Safety and Quality Unit would be maintained under the new structure;
- o) noted that further budgetary transfers could arise as a result of requirements stemming from COVID-19, guidance from the Regional Conferences, further work planning, and from the most efficient and effective modalities of implementation during the biennium;
- p) recommended the Council consider approval of the proposed *Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-21* following the provision of the additional information by FAO Management as requested by Members prior to the 164th Session of the Council.

III. Programme Implementation Report 2018-19⁹

- 10. The Joint Meeting welcomed the *Programme Implementation Report (PIR) 2018-19*, and the overall progress made by the Organization.
- 11. The Joint Meeting:
 - a) welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work in 2018-19, welcomed FAO's results in reaching 95% (41) of its 43 output indicators targets, and welcomed the 7.2% increase in total expenditure compared to the preceding biennium;
 - b) welcomed a 17% increase over 2016-17 of voluntary contributions mobilized from resource partners in support of FAO's programme of work, while recognizing the importance of un-earmarked voluntary contributions for a more balanced and effective programme of work;
 - c) took note of the reporting on the use of 2016-17 carry-over;
 - d) expressed satisfaction at the achievement of USD 11.7 million efficiency savings in the biennium;
 - e) noted that although FAO had achieved almost all of its output targets for 2018-19, was concerned that global progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) remained off track and looked forward to taking the discussion forward with the development of the new Strategic Framework;
 - f) noted the underperformance towards several Key Performance Indicators under Functional Objective 10 (FAO Governance, Oversight and Direction) and urged Management to take remedial action;
 - g) noted that science and evidence-based publications were important instruments providing effective and efficient channels of information, and stressed the importance of quality while improving balance in translations in FAO languages, in accordance with the principle of multilingualism;
 - h) discussed the importance of local languages to ensure that FAO publications were fully disseminated at country level based on extra-budgetary resources;

⁹ C 2021/8; C 2021/8 Web Annexes 7 and 8

- i) requested more information be provided on the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), looked forward to the results of its evaluation and requested that a stand-alone item on TCP be added to the agenda of the forthcoming session of the Joint Meeting in November 2020;
- j) took note of achievements of Outcomes and Outputs under the Strategic and Functional Objectives, as measured by indicators and targets;
- k) recommended the adoption of the *Programme Implementation Report 2018-19* by the Council.

IV. Use of the Unspent Balance of the 2018-19 Biennial Appropriation¹⁰

12. The Joint Meeting:

- a) recalled that the 41st Session of Conference authorized the Director-General, notwithstanding Financial Regulation 4.2, to use any unspent balance of the 2018-19 appropriation for one-time uses in 2020-21 based on a proposal to be submitted to and endorsed by the Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees, and agreed to by the Council at their respective sessions in June and in July 2020;
- b) noted that the broader discussion on the systematic use of unspent balances was ongoing and looked forward to taking this discussion forward at its next meeting together with the guidance provided by the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) at its May 2020 Session;¹¹
- c) expressed general support for four proposals presented in Table A-1.1 of Annex 1 of document FC 180/6, namely:
 - i. Digitalization improvements;
 - ii. Information security and geospatial data;
 - iii. Emergency Operations Centre; and
 - iv. Security and crisis management control facilities;
- d) in light of the COVID-19 global crisis and its impact on food security, stressed the need for the Organization to address new priorities and to use the unspent balance in its areas of comparative advantages and in particular to strengthen the resilience of global food security and food systems;
- e) while recognizing the importance of the well-being of staff and visitors at headquarters, rejected the proposals for the use of the unspent balance for short-term increase in human resources and streamlined catering and upgraded kitchen facilities and encouraged Management to identify alternative resources for upgrading the kitchen facilities including voluntary contributions from Members and the private sector as well as CAPEX funding;
- f) requested Management to identify appropriate alternative uses of USD 1.3 million proposed for the kitchen facilities upgrade and of USD 0.7 million for “Short-term increase in human resources to meet country-and territory-specific data, analysis and policy support needs”, while prioritizing COVID-19 response, and submit these alternative uses prior to the 164th Session of the Council for review and endorsement;
- g) noted that implementation of the proposed one-time uses of the unspent balance would be reported to the Finance Committee as part of regular reporting on budgetary performance, and would be reported to the Governing Bodies as part of the *Programme Implementation Report 2020-21*;

¹⁰ FC 180/6 Annex 1

¹¹ CCLM 110/3

- h) recommended to transmit to the Council for endorsement the proposed one-time uses of the unspent balance of the 2018-19 appropriations of USD 3.6 million presented in *Annex 1* to this Report and with the recommendations made in the previous paragraphs c) and f).

V. The GFFA 2020's call upon FAO's Governing Bodies “to support a process” for “the establishment of an International Digital Council for Food and Agriculture”¹²

13. The Joint Meeting:

- a) recognized the increasing importance of the application of digital technologies in food and agriculture, especially during the current COVID-19 crisis, and stressed the need to reduce the digital gap, strengthen the role of small and medium farmers, reducing inequalities and increasing resilience, and promote access to all, including women and youth;
- b) noted the importance of digitalization in contributing to business continuity in food and agriculture sectors, as well as in avoiding disruptions in food supply chains, especially within the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic;
- c) noted that the platform should be funded by extra-budgetary resources and indicated the need to establish transparent evaluation mechanisms;
- d) noted the coordination and knowledge sharing character of the platform, which would support all FAO’s Strategic Objectives by building an enabling environment for digital technologies to accelerate effective delivery, maximize the related benefits and minimize the underlying risks, such as those in relation to privacy and protection of personal data, and also fell within the core functions of the Organization;
- e) stressed that the hosting of such a platform should not result in the creation of an autonomous legal entity nor a new FAO Governing Body but rather, in a flexible, light, inclusive and voluntary coordination mechanism supported by the Organization while complying with its regulations, rules and procedures;
- f) requested that the platform be inclusive and transparent with no duplication of activities under the mandate of other international organizations or other global multi-stakeholder initiatives already underway to address broader digital issues;
- g) highlighted that the platform should focus on knowledge and good practices sharing and not be a policy setting mechanism;
- h) requested Management to provide periodic information on modality and structure, such as membership, governance and timeline for establishing the platform;
- i) requested that, following FAO Council approval to support the process, a review be undertaken after a five-year trial period to evaluate its sustainability and recommend future options, considering practices and lessons learned from similar platforms and partnerships hosted by FAO; and
- j) recommended that the Council approve the recommendation that the proposed platform be called the “International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture”.

¹² JM 2020.1/3; JM 2020.1/3 Information Note 1

VI. Update on COVID-19 and its consequences for food security and food systems¹³

14. The Joint Meeting:

- a) welcomed the update on COVID-19 and its consequences for food security and food systems;
- b) expressed appreciation for the Organization's response to the crisis and its continuous assessment of the impact of COVID-19 in the short- and long-term in all parts of the food and agriculture system;
- c) welcomed the Organization's advocacy to ensure that trade corridors be kept open and that national restrictions be lifted to guarantee the functioning of food systems and food supply around the world to prevent a health crisis from becoming a food crisis;
- d) highlighted the importance of Rome-based Agencies, other UN agencies and stakeholders collaborating across sectors and borders to address the impact of the pandemic in the short- and long-term;
- e) appreciated the Organization's work with UN Country Teams and other agencies, within the reform of the United Nations development system, to assess the evolving food security situation and increase efforts to improve and address emerging threats to food security at local level;
- f) acknowledged that the outbreak of COVID-19 had posed an unprecedented challenge with deep social and economic consequences, including compromising food security and nutrition, and stressed the need to reinforce investments in the Organization's work on zoonotic disease within existing resources, to prevent future outbreaks and increase resilience, in line with the One Health approach;
- g) encouraged the Organization to include gender in its assessment of the COVID-19 crisis;
- h) expressed concern for the economic consequences of the pandemic which could hamper investments in sustainable agriculture and impact food systems, and encouraged FAO to increase focus on investment in sustainable food systems and agriculture;
- i) recognizing the challenges arising from the outbreak of COVID-19, including its impact on food loss and food waste, acknowledged the importance of the *State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2019* on the topic, and encouraged increased coordination with all UN agencies working on this topic;
- j) emphasized the need for country assessment reports and exchange of best practices applied by Members during COVID-19;
- k) requested further information on FAO's response for regions experiencing heightened food security issues such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- l) welcomed the Organization's role in providing evidence-based policy analyses and recommendations at global, regional and country levels within its mandate;
- m) looked forward to dissemination of the Organization's policy briefs in all FAO languages; and
- n) welcomed Management's agreement to provide further information on FAO's plans to manage the risks to its own operations posed by COVID-19.

¹³ JM 2020.1/4

Annex 1

Use of the Unspent Balance of the 2018-19 Biennial Appropriation

Table A-1.1: Proposal for use of the 2018-19 unspent balance (USD million)

| Item | | Amount in USD |
|--------------|--|---------------|
| 1 | Short-term increase in human resources to meet country- and territory-specific data, analysis and policy support needs | 0.7 |
| 2 | Digitalization improvements | 0.6 |
| 3 | Information security and geospatial data | 0.3 |
| 4 | Emergency Operations Centre | 0.2 |
| 5 | Security and crisis management control facilities | 0.5 |
| 6 | Streamlined catering and kitchen facilities | 1.3 |
| Total | | 3.6 |