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Decentralized Offices Network

Executive Summary

FAO's Decentralized Offices strategic positioning has been significantly affected by a paradigm shift in the global development system and changing external landscape. FAO is actively contributing to the implementation of United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the UN Development System, (UNDS) repositioning, with an overall objective to reinforce collaborative efforts and work in a greater synergy between UN partners and especially with Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

FAO's immediate priority in the course of 2020 and beyond would be to revamp its Decentralized Offices business model to pursue a programmatic approach and contribute more strategically to the UN system collective response to the aspirations of the members' 2030 Agenda towards the attainment of the SDGs. In this context, FAO's contribution to the collaborative UN development effort will focus on achieving food security and nutrition through transformation of the food and agriculture systems.

The upcoming UN Decade on SDG acceleration will be a critical milestone for FAO's decentralized network to support national governments across various SDGs, focusing particularly on accelerating agricultural and rural transformation to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2), in line with the newly launched flagship Hand-in-Hand Initiative.

Following the subsidiarity principle, FAO aims to increase further the autonomy of its Decentralized Offices at (sub) Regional and country level for decision-making over resources, staff, policies and regulations that were previously centralized, in order to shift the Organization from a centre-out approach to one driven by demands at country and regional level. Efforts have already been made and are underway to progressively increase the flexibility afforded to Decentralized Offices to manage available budgeted resources. Furthermore, this approach was underpinned by greater delegation of authority to Decentralized Offices in various fields, including procurement and human resources, with the overall objective to ensure effective, agile and result-oriented delivery of FAO's programme of work on the ground.

In parallel, in line with recommendations from oversight bodies, FAO has been taking consistent internal measures to strengthen oversight, transparency and integrity in Decentralized Offices. A robust internal control and risk management system has been put in place, to ensure adequate

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accountability measures and increased responsibility of managers in Decentralized Offices. This shift will continue by enhancing monitoring and evaluation function in the field, aiming to increase Decentralized Offices capacities, efficiency and responsiveness to member countries' needs.

Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference may wish to:

- Support FAO Management's efforts towards increasing delegations of authority and decentralizing decision-making in administrative and programmatic areas, including human resources and procurement, which aim to improve overall delivery of the strategic programmes and respond to the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.
- Request FAO to continue efforts to strengthen its technical capacities and policy integration at regional and subregional levels, ensure FAO leadership in the region across relevant SDGs, (including those under FAO's custodianship), with special attention to addressing hunger and poverty in the most needy and vulnerable countries, as prioritized by the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, and contribute effectively to the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) or "Cooperation Frameworks".
- Request FAO to shift towards a full programmatic approach at decentralized level to demonstrate better its valuable contributions to the SDG achievements in line with recommendations of the evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework.
- Support FAO's continued engagement in the implementation of the UN Development System repositioning at regional and country levels, and provide guidance on FAO's strategic direction with regard to its value proposition in the region.
- Request FAO to evaluate, identify and seize emerging opportunities arising from UN reform at country and regional levels, building on lessons learned and successful experiences in collaboration with other partners, especially in the RBA environment.

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

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I. Background: Setting the Scene for FAO's Decentralization Policies and External Drivers

1. FAO's Decentralized Offices strategic positioning has been significantly affected by a paradigm shift in the global development system and changing external landscape. The 2030 Agenda and related paradigm shift in the development system, requires FAO to coordinate its contributions in a multisectoral context towards the achievement of the SDGs at the national level.
2. FAO is actively contributing to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the UN Development System (UNDS) repositioning, with an overall objective to reinforce collaborative efforts and work in a synergetic manner with other UN partners and especially with Rome-based Agencies (RBAs). The ambitious UNDS repositioning process has placed a strong emphasis on UN agencies engaging in partnerships and joint planning and programming, resource mobilization and common business operations at decentralized levels, and envisages a restructuring of UN regional assets.
3. FAO is engaged in the development and rollout of the RBA Action Plan for 2019-20, designed to operationalize the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2018. The progress in the RBAs' collaboration at decentralized level, including on joint advocacy, analysis and planning is an important contribution to the UN reform implementation.
4. Growing decentralization of resource and investment mobilization efforts within the emerging development landscape is another new dimension, requiring the development of a new business model for FAO's Decentralized Offices, including a greater focus on continuing to leverage investments in support of national goals.
5. Increasing importance of the regional and subregional dimension of development cooperation requires strengthened partnerships, high-level policy capacities and technical knowledge to develop region-specific solutions and to address challenges of a transboundary nature.
6. Evolving country contexts, with more countries graduating into the middle income and high-income economic categories and changing national needs and priorities, compounded with ongoing transformations in countries' food and agricultural systems are important drivers for FAOR country office transformation. Increasing influence of regional and subregional intergovernmental and economic integration organizations, is a new reality impacting country-level policies and donors' agendas as well as FAO's positioning at decentralized level.
7. Last but not least, major global challenges and policies affecting FAO's work in regions and countries, including *inter alia* the UN Decade of Action on the SDGs, UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025); the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2016), the Global Compact on Migration (2018), the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019) and the future outcomes of the forthcoming UN Food Systems Summit, need to be taken into due consideration in Decentralized Offices strategic planning and programming.

II. Common Achievements among the Five Regions

8. In 2018-2019, FAO continued to invest in strengthening its Decentralized Offices network and its technical capacities across the regions to increase the impact of its work at the country level, supporting member countries in their efforts to attain the SDGs. FAO has been pursuing a two-fold strategy that consisted of strengthening FAO's collaborative efforts towards capacity development and leadership at country and regional level, on the one hand, and improving internal performance, decision-making systems and delivery services to ensure more integrity and transparency and to be fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda, on the other hand.

Strengthening the Capacities, Leadership and Partnerships at Decentralized Offices

Strengthening Capacities

9. Pursuant to the guidance provided by FAO Council at its 163rd session (2-6 December 2019), FAO will continue efforts to strengthen the work of Decentralized Offices without negatively affecting the technical capacity at headquarters. Launched in the previous biennium, this process is implementing the guidance provided by the Regional Conferences in 2018 concerning the need for increased efficiency, flexibility and capacity of Decentralized Offices, and prioritized and tailored support to meet countries' specific needs. FAO started the transformation of country office business models, aiming to provide much needed flexibility for resource allocation at the country level to address emerging needs, including larger allocations to the most vulnerable countries.
10. These efforts will be further enhanced in 2020 and beyond to ensure that FAO's Decentralized Offices are adequately equipped to offer high-level technical and programming expertise and adapt their respective skillsets to evolving priorities and changing external environment. In an ever-more competitive environment in the field, thinly-resourced country offices would require greater capacity and backstopping support for joint planning, programming and resource mobilization as well as partnerships in the framework of a reinvigorated UN Resident Coordinators (RC) system. Financial and human resources will be provided 'on-demand' to the roll-out countries starting the new Cooperation Framework cycle. This support includes skilled 'FAO Surge Capacity Teams' from different levels and areas of expertise of the Organization to be timely involved, and deployed as required, during the critical steps of the preparation of the CCA and the entire visioning exercise, from which FAO's Country Programming Framework (CPF) will be derived. The proposed FAO Platform based on GIS under the newly launched flagship Hand-in-Hand initiative will also accelerate FAO's contribution to the CCA. The adjustment of staff profiles will be undertaken, including a skill mix exercise and analysis of gaps in terms of profiles.
11. Pursuant to the recommendations from the Internal Review of FAO Regional Structures (2019), opportunities will be explored to focus thematically the multidisciplinary teams in the subregional and regional offices. In addition, opportunities will be explored to provide integrated solutions and ensure better access of countries to FAO's technical expertise, knowledge and policy support to complement the overall review of the UN regional architecture of establishing issue-based coalitions. The innovative business model of Partnership and Liaison Offices (PLOs) will be further explored and expanded to interested upper and lower middle-income countries, with stronger emphasis on their potential role as centres of excellence, including through South-South and Triangular cooperation.

Strengthening FAO's Leadership in the UN Country Team (UNCT)

12. As evidenced by initial lessons learned from the implementation of the UNDS repositioning in the roll-out countries¹ and in order to harvest the potential of this renewed UN partnership, FAO country offices need to demonstrate strong leadership capacity within UNCTs. In particular, the new reinvigorated RC system has provided an opportunity for FAO country representatives to leverage political support from the independent and impartial RC system for sustainable food systems, agriculture, nutrition and food security. Sixty-eight percent of FAO Representatives (FAOR) consider the new leadership of the RC as being independent and impartial with respect to their interaction with UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes.²
13. Since the launch of the UNDS repositioning on 1 January 2019, appropriate actions have been taken and guidance designed and provided to Decentralized Offices to ensure FAO's leadership role in the process. FAOR profiles (job descriptions) were adjusted with a strong focus on sustainable development, especially on agriculture and food systems transformation. From 2020, FAORs are accountable to the RC on joint development results, as their performance plans were modified in the performance evaluation tool. FAO is consolidating global knowledge management function to support country-level interventions through targeted collection, analysis and dissemination of corporate data and statistics on measurable indicators. Special trainings tools are being designed to support FAORs to implement the reform. FAO has been more proactively engaged in leading or co-leading more systematically the work of various thematic results groups and other mechanisms within UNCTs.
14. Furthermore, FAO has substantially revised its CPF Guidelines in order to make the planning and programming instrument at country level fully aligned with and derived from the Cooperation Framework, as required by UNSDCF Guidelines.
15. FAO is also part to the design of country-level UN Business Operations Strategies (BOS). These have the overall objective to improve efficiency, accountability and cohesion through enhanced collaboration and greater synergies between agencies administrative services and back offices with a view to achieving overall cost savings to be redeployed in support of development initiatives towards the attainment of the SDGs. These efforts complement the current vertical integration of administrative services already achieved through the FAO Shared Services Centre.

Defining FAO's Value Proposition in the UN Regional Architecture

16. Throughout 2019, FAO has been fully engaged in the work of the interagency Internal Review Team (IRT) on the UN Regional Review, which resulted in the establishment of a single Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) for each region with UN Development Coordination office (DCO) serving as a Secretariat.
17. With regard to the RCP, the Organization is actively supporting the analytical and programmatic framework and advisory services, advocacy and convening functions especially for regional processes, strengthened coordination and support to UN RCs through policy work, analysis and information.

¹ Results received from FAO's Internal Survey on the UN reform held in October-November 2019 with participation of all country offices

² Same as previous

18. FAO is actively engaging in the formulation of CCAs and is participating in the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) missions in selected countries for further connection and/or integration with the new cycle of Cooperation Frameworks.
19. FAO Regional Offices are providing technical and policy support to country offices in the various steps of the formulation of the Cooperation Frameworks.
20. Selected FAO Regional Officers have been appointed as members of the Regional Peer Support Groups (PSGs) coordinated by the newly established Regional DCO Offices, tasked to peer-review the quality of the CCAs and other parts of the Cooperation Frameworks, ensuring FAO's comparative advantage and contribution to relevant SDG targets are clearly recognized.
21. By pursuing cost-effective and demand-driven collaboration with UN partners at regional and subregional level that is underpinned by a clear value proposition for the UN system as defined in the IRT, FAO will be able to provide adequate responses to emerging cross-border or common development issues and priorities in the specific regional context. FAO has been supportive and committed to facilitate the proposed issue-based coalitions across various thematic clusters. FAO's regional efforts will also concentrate on improving accessibility to finance and investments through closer engagement with private sector and International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

Prioritizing FAO's Support to LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS

22. Responding to the request of the FAO Council at its 159th session (4-8 June 2018) and in recognition of FAO membership's firm political commitment of reaching populations in far-off and isolated places in line with the principle of 'Leaving No one Behind', the FAO Director-General is placing strong emphasis on providing special targeted assistance to address the challenges of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs). This newly established dedicated office in FAO headquarters will coordinate and harmonize policy support to these countries, and the newly launched flagship Hand-in-Hand Initiative is serving as a platform for better facilitation and acceleration of FAO's contribution to countries in achieving SDGs 1 and 2.

Enhancing RBA collaboration

23. The ongoing repositioning of the UNDS is playing a strong catalytic role in advancing the three RBAs' cooperation at country and regional levels. In response to the recommendations approved by the FAO Council at its 159th session in June 2018, there is growing effort to make this collaboration more systematic, strategic and focusing on programmatic approaches. The RBAs are demonstrating active team engagement in this process in the field and are positioning themselves as "natural allies", thus advocating jointly for placing food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture high on the UN country agenda. RBAs are more closely engaged in designing joint programmes on food, nutrition and agriculture at country level as part of the UNSDCF, including piloting of joint country plans in selected countries (Colombia, Indonesia and the Niger).

Improving Internal Performance and Oversight, Decision-making Systems and Delivery Services:

Decentralizing Decision-making and Delegation of Authority

24. Since the initial phases of decentralization, in response to decisions taken by member countries at the 163rd Session of the FAO Council and following the subsidiarity principle, the Organization has been taking continued measures to delegate increasing authority to Decentralized Offices, especially on planning, programming and resource mobilization. Most recently, FAO has been sharpening its focus on ensuring meaningful delegation of authority in operational matters, especially on human resources management and procurement, as reaffirmed by the Internal Review of FAO's Regional Structures (2019) and the Evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework (2019). These efforts will continue in 2020 and beyond, with an objective to speed up FAO's delivery and avoid delays in project implementation, to meet the expectations of the 2030 Agenda and engage in joint programme implementation with other United Nations' partners. Actions being implemented include the revision of the Non-Staff Human Resources (NSHR) policy, allowing the delegation of increased decision-making authority from headquarters to the Regional Offices in various fields, including recruitment of non-staff resources and streamlining of various clearance procedures. Also, the newly introduced revised procurement policy of FAO (Manual Section 502) allows increased delegation of authority for heads of Decentralized Offices, provided that local capacities are in place (i.e. training) and/or International Procurement Officers (IPOs) are available in the country or at (sub)regional level to support national and regional procurement actions.

Improving Internal Performance, Control and Risk Management Functions in the Decentralized Offices

25. FAO introduced strengthened internal controls, operational management (including fiduciary risk) and risk management functions in the Decentralized Offices, as recognized by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) Assessment Report 2017-2018. The full-scale implementation of risk management function roll-out in the Decentralized Offices, including more integrated and streamlined systems for planning, monitoring and reporting on risks is underway and will be completed in the course of 2020. In parallel, to increase the local capacity, FAO launched a new knowledge exchange and training programme, including temporary geographic mobility placements for Assistant FAORs, group briefings for new FAORs and cross-regional 'Think Labs', enabling country offices to share experiences, good practices and solutions to common challenges across all five regions.

III. Achievements and Challenges in the Africa Region

26. The Regional Office for Africa (RAF) is strengthening and aligning some of its activities to leverage greater synergies between resource mobilization, communication, partnerships including South-South cooperation programmes to pursue strategic advocacy that intends to yield increased impact in the area of resource mobilization. This is done through targeted partnerships with a focused promotion and marketing, which seeks to position the Organization as a valued partner at the regional level and build upon its comparative advantage as a technical body of knowledge and expertise.

27. Resources mobilized during the biennium 2018-2019 in the region showed an increase of about 9 percent compared to the average of the past two biennia (2014-2017). There has also been efforts towards diversifying the partnership base to include new global facilities, newly emerging donors as well as member countries, including through the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF), which was hosted by His Excellency President of Equatorial Guinea to mobilize a total of USD 25.1 million from six member countries, namely, Angola (USD 10 million), China (USD 2.6 million), Equatorial Guinea (USD 10 million), Eswatini (USD 100 000), France (EUR 2 million) and Zimbabwe (USD 100 000).
28. Partnerships were strengthened with the relevant key stakeholders. FAO, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the World Bank organized the Africa Food Security Leadership Dialogue, in Kigali, Rwanda in August 2019, which led to the signing of a joint Communiqué to work together to support member countries on food security and climate change agenda. Memoranda of Understanding were signed with partners such as academia/research institutions (e.g. Regional Universities FORUM), civil society, cooperatives and/or producers' organizations (e.g. Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa, ROPPA). Also, national and subregional parliamentary alliances were strengthened for the use of their advocacy roles. Collaboration with South-South-Triangular cooperation partners has been strengthened.
29. FAO in Africa substantially scaled up the scope of communication work and level of outreach. A Communications Strategy was developed, leading to strengthening the brand and visibility of FAO and increased the capacities at country level. The quantity and quality of regional publications have improved, which showcased Africa's success stories covering the topics of Zero Hunger, biodiversity, gender, resilience, and human interest. The communications network was also strengthened, resulting in opportunities for staff to leverage skills and capacities and exchange of best practices to maximize the impacts of advocacy events.
30. Improvements were made in financial management at the regional office, commencing with processing payments through e-banking for vendors. Currently, more than 35 vendors are actively being paid through e-banking, up from two at the beginning of the biennium. In addition, mobile payments to beneficiaries for workshops have commenced (not just cash payments). This eliminates the need for staff to carry large sums of cash on their persons to pay hotel or food costs. These efforts improve efficiencies and greatly reduce opportunities for fraud.
31. Emphasis was placed on addressing asset management, such that during the course of the biennium, the regional office has substantially reduced its non-compliance rate for asset management from 22 to 3 percent (FAO's acceptable threshold level is 5 percent).
32. To strengthen risk management capacity and functioning in the region, FAO implemented two workshops, in French and in English, in September and October 2019, which has markedly improved capacities of over 110 staff. FAO should build on this first risk-management course and regularly organize and further develop such training courses, as the Organization's approach to risk evolves. The Regional Office in collaboration with headquarters will continue to foster training like this for all staff to ensure the most efficient financial operations at the lowest possible risk.
33. Efforts were made to provide greater dedicated support to hiring managers and complete pending recruitment processes for project posts across the region. Efforts were geared towards increasing the quality and compliance level of each step of the recruitment process for staff and non-staff human resources, and particularly with regard to screening applications and drafting effective selection reports. This has enabled RAF to reduce the time to fill vacancies.

- Collaboration and communication with country and subregional offices have steadily improved through regular skype briefings with country office personnel, and regular coaching and training sessions with FAORs. These efforts need to be scaled up in 2020 to build greater capacity for delivering excellent HR processes and services across the region. A staff development plan was implemented successfully in 2019. It also allowed strengthening collaboration with headquarters to offer more e-learning solutions to RAF employees, but also face-to-face training on corporate priorities, such as procurement and protection from sexual abuse and exploitation of beneficiaries.
34. The Regional Office has emphasized the timely filling of key positions to strengthen the delivery capacity in country offices, including by optimizing available resources through regular periodic budget reviews. Several FAOR positions have been filled to ensure continuity in service and programme delivery. Internal capacities have been built through the FAO corporate systems and in other key areas such as administration on financial risk management, procurement on new processes and procedures, programme and project management as well as use of FAO corporate systems. Periodic trainings have been offered to the country offices on mobilization of resources and partnerships.
 35. Procurement capacity has been strengthened through training over 150 staff in the region on the new procurement policy. RAF conducted this training in both English and French not only for procurement staff, but also for FAORs and administrative staff.
 36. In cooperation with the UNDP Green Team, a 105 kWp grid-tied solar PV system, the largest built in an FAO Decentralized Office to date, was inaugurated in December 2019. The system enables FAO to reduce greatly its energy-related expenses for the office and covers 30-40 percent of the office energy demand. Furthermore, the system will improve the office business continuity since it can automatically switch from grid to generator to work also in case of national electricity power outages. Finally, 40 tonnes of CO₂eq (equal to the emissions of nine cars driven in one year) will be reduced annually.
 37. The Subregional Office for West Africa (SFW) has been established, covering the 15 West African member countries, and serves as a hub for humanitarian and resilience support through planning, programming, operation and reporting. The SFW Multidisciplinary Team was established both through transfer of posts from RAF, which had previously been covering the functions for the subregion, and posts funded under the Host Country Agreement. The operationalization of SFW contributed to the reinforcement of administrative, operational and technical capacities to better support countries of the subregion.
 38. In spite of these efforts and achievements, the region is still dealing with some challenges:
 - a. With regard to technical skills and competencies needed to tackle key regional development concerns, some gaps, and specific expertise such as pastoralism are not adequate in number to sufficiently support the large number of projects or provide technical services to locations where they are needed.
 - b. Lengthy and cumbersome processes appear to be significant challenges that hinder the Organization's ability to deliver timely on expectations. Particularly in a region which presents "emergency prone" and complex context, with short-term requirements and crisis situations.

IV. The Way Forward

Global dimension

39. Given the increasing frequency and gravity of external challenges and drivers, FAO's Decentralized Offices positioning in the medium term will require systematic review and analysis and a higher level of flexibility and adaptation, to respond to the expectations of member countries.
40. In the 2020-2021 biennium, FAO needs to pursue the following objectives to address challenges and harness new opportunities:
 - a. *Shift towards a Fully Programmatic Approach at Decentralized Level:*

By accelerating the shift towards a fully programmatic approach and by setting more tangible programmatic objectives at country and regional level, FAO will be able to leverage its global policy, regulatory, scientific and technical contribution in support of the 2030 Agenda and attainment of SDGs. This will also help FAO to contribute to the UN Cooperation Framework in the areas of its core mandate. This process will be assessed in the review of FAO's Strategic Framework, which will take place in 2020.
 - b. *Advance FAO's Value Proposition at Regional Level in the Context of UNDS Repositioning:*

By consolidating regionalized knowledge and technical capacity and engaging in the proposed "issue-based coalitions" which are networks of UN agencies' capacities across various thematic clusters, FAO will be able to lead the UN regional response to country needs in the areas of its core mandate and improve member countries' access to FAO's regional expertise. FAO's policy integration capacities and abilities at regional level, including through innovation and analysis would be key to succeed in this important and challenging dimension. FAO's strong capacity within the Global Programme of Action on Food Security and Nutrition (GAP) to address the special needs of the SIDS in the framework of the Samoa Pathway would serve as a strong asset to leverage FAO's leadership and comparative strength in countries served by Multi-Country Offices (MCOs), such as the Pacific, Caribbean, and Indian Ocean and Atlantic Islands.
 - c. *Lead on Food Security, Agriculture and Nutrition at the Country Level:*

By capitalizing on the redesigned Cooperation Framework cycle to increase attention at national level to food security, agriculture and nutrition agendas, FAO will be able to influence the UN agenda at the country level, gearing towards a multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral approach. An important area of work will be to tighten the alignment of FAO's results framework to the SDG indicators and draw on monitoring and evaluation capacities to strengthen FAO's country-level monitoring and reporting tools.
 - d. *Promote Inclusive Partnerships at Regional and Country Level:*

Promoting a strengthened and more results-oriented collaboration with other UN partners and especially RBAs, based on synergies and complementarities, is a prerequisite to address the challenges ahead and achieve the aforementioned objectives. FAO will also sharpen its focus on partnering with public and private investors and on promoting innovative partnerships. The elaboration of a new vision for collaboration with the private sector, as requested by the FAO Council at its 163rd session in December 2019 [CL 163/REP paragraph 10.b] will have significant implications for shaping new partnerships at Decentralized Offices level.
 - e. *Boost Operational Capacity:*

As recommended by MOPAN (2017-18) and the Internal Review of FAO's Regional Structures (2019), in the 2020-2021 biennium, FAO will continue to apply further action to boost operational efficiencies through the decentralization of key management and operational processes, increased delegations of authority, improved monitoring and evaluation and

reporting capacities at the country level, with the objective of improving overall performance and programmatic delivery.

f. *Promote Innovation at Decentralized Levels:*

In line with the vision of the Director-General, the Decentralized Offices network will be fully engaged in the FAO digitalization process and promotion of innovations in the field to accelerate progress in delivering the 2030 Agenda. The new corporate vision will be defined by a newly established Office for Innovation at headquarters, which will consolidate and strengthen FAO's innovative ethos, including innovation of mind-set, innovation of cooperation models, and innovation of application by digitalization. The Decentralized Offices network will be at the forefront of efforts to promote innovative methodologies, approaches and programmes that can be sustainably scaled up in cooperation with national governments, private sector, academia and civil society. Taking into consideration that there is no global solution to some of the challenges that we are facing today, and there is no one size fits all, Decentralized Offices will play a valuable role in adapting innovative solutions and business models to the local context, and specific needs and demands of the countries.

Regional dimension:

41. On the way forward, RAF seeks to address these challenges by taking the necessary steps.

- a) Increase visibility and presence/capacity of FAO in the region to demonstrate impact, influence relevant policy processes, dialogues and agendas from the country, subregional and regional and global levels, and ground this in solid evidence and knowledge from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and learning from technical work, programme and projects at the field level and across countries; and use this to nurture partnerships and dialogues with different actors, in different arenas, through a more strategic approach to partnerships, resource mobilization, communication and advocacy.
- b) Rethink the skills and competency mix needed to improve Programme delivery, and the collaboration, coordination and communication model between country, subregional, regional and headquarters offices to enable smoother synergies and linkages between them to deliver on RAF's complex mandate collectively.
- c) Move away from projects with less visibility and impact and refocus programmes and initiatives that mobilize major resources as well as partnerships to achieve food security and sustainable inclusive agricultural transformation. Overall, knowledge management and M&E functions need significant strengthening as an important step towards a fully-fledged programmatic approach, enabling a better aggregation of results and integration of good practices and lessons learned, in line with a "managing for results" approach.
- d) Streamline and decentralize processes, especially for sourcing, deploying and managing talents and for procuring goods and services in a timely and effective way right where they are needed. To this end, consider recruiting for different profiles beyond technical expertise in specific subsectors and core support functions; add more unique profiles and/or teams to blend technical expertise.
- e) Strengthen stakeholder engagement and partnership building; improve resource mobilization, strategic communication, policy analysis and facilitation of policy development/reform; and learn to manage diversity of backgrounds, disciplines, geographical and technical expertise, languages, areas of development and policy work for greater effectiveness.