



COUNCIL

Hundred and Seventy-second Session

Rome, 24-28 April 2023

Report of the 135th Session of the Programme Committee (Rome, 13-17 March 2023)

Executive summary

In the Report of its 135th Session, the Programme Committee:

- 1) **makes specific recommendations for decision by the Council** on: the Medium Term Plan (Reviewed) 2022-25 and Programme of Work and Budget 2024-25; and the FAO Evaluation Strategy: An Interim Strategy for the Office of Evaluation to build an architecture for excellence in supporting Management and Members' culture of evidence in decision-making;
- 2) **brings to the attention of the Council for its endorsement**, the conclusions regarding: the Mid-Term Review Synthesis Report – 2022; the Evaluation of FAO's evaluation function – Terms of Reference; the Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's support to climate action (SDG 13) and the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change (2017); the Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's role and work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR); and the update on water resources management;
- 3) **informs the Council** of the Programme Committee's considerations related to: the update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative; the update on FAO's private sector engagement; the update on FAO statistics work for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators and the UN Statistical Commission; the update on the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031; the update on the implementation of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy; and the Progress report on the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025.

Suggested action by the Council

The Council is invited to:

- 1) **endorse** the recommendations of the Committee on:
 - a) the Medium Term Plan (Reviewed) 2022-25 and Programme of Work and Budget 2024-25; and
 - b) the FAO Evaluation Strategy: An Interim Strategy for the Office of Evaluation to build an architecture for excellence in supporting Management and Members' culture of evidence in decision-making.
- 2) **endorse** the conclusions of the Committee on:
 - a) the Mid-Term Review Synthesis Report – 2022;
 - b) the Evaluation of FAO's evaluation function – Terms of Reference;
 - c) the Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's support to climate action (SDG 13) and the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change (2017);
 - d) the Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's role and work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR); and
 - e) the update on water resources management.
- 3) **note** the Committee's considerations on:
 - a) the update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative;
 - b) the update on FAO's private sector engagement;
 - c) the update on FAO statistics work for SDG indicators and the UN Statistical Commission;
 - d) the update on the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031;
 - e) the update on the implementation of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy; and
 - f) the progress report on the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025.

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

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Introduction

1. The Programme Committee (PC) submitted to the Council the following Report of its Hundred and Thirty-fifth Session.

2. In addition to the Chairperson, H.E. (Ms) Yael Rubinstein (Israel), the following representatives of Members were present:

H.E. (Mr) Carlos Bernardo Cherniak (Argentina)	H.E. (Mr) Aly Coulibaly (Mali) ³
Mr Arnaldo de Baena Fernandes (Brazil) ¹	Ms Jenny Reid (New Zealand)
Mr Maarten de Groot (Canada)	Ms Bjørg Skotnes (Norway)
Mr LI Bo (China) ²	Ms Saadia Elmubarak Ahmed Daak (Sudan)
Mr Michel Lévêque (France)	Mr Kayoya Masuhwa (Zambia)

3. Iraq and India were not represented.

I. Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Timetable

4. The Committee noted that Item 14 will be addressed under a written correspondence procedure, agreed to add an oral briefing of FAO's work on livestock under Item 17 - *Any Other Matters*, and adopted the Provisional Agenda and Timetable for the Session.

¹ Mr Arnaldo de Baena Fernandes was designated to replace H.E. (Mr) Fernando José Marroni de Abreu.

² Mr GUO Su was designated to replace Mr LI Bo for part of the Session.

³ H.E. (Mr) Aly Coulibaly was designated to replace Ms Traoré Halimatou Kone.

II. Medium Term Plan (Reviewed) 2022-25 and Programme of Work and Budget 2024-25

5. The Committee:

- a) recognized the Organization's unique position and role in transforming agrifood systems in accordance with national contexts, priorities and capacities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁴;
- b) appreciated the overview of global challenges and recent trends and risks to global food security, reiterated the importance of technology, data, innovation and complements as accelerators in the work of the Organization, and underscored the essential nature of the Organization's support to standard-setting and normative work;
- c) stressed the need for FAO to provide consistent and timely information, including statistics, taking into consideration the needs of Members, and requested that FAO include, as possible and when necessary, regionally balanced academic representation during expert consultation processes, to capture different approaches, knowledge and needs based on countries' capacities;
- d) requested that FAO's initiative "Road to SDG 2 and 1.5 degrees Celsius" which aims to address food security challenges be developed in a transparent manner, incorporating Members into discussion through, as appropriate, informal consultations and in line with the Organization's mandate;
- e) encouraged the Organization's continued agile response to emerging challenges;
- f) highlighted the importance of implementing the Strategies on Climate Change, on Science and Innovation, and on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors in a coordinated manner and as an integral part of the Programme of Work for improved effectiveness and impact;
- g) took note of and welcomed FAO's work on evaluating the impact of agricultural support, including on outlining how funding could be repurposed to better support food security globally, within its mandate;
- h) appreciated the support to Members in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) highlighted in Annex 1, and recommended to include this in paragraph 83 *fisheries and aquaculture*;
- i) reiterated that several concepts and language used in the document were not multilaterally agreed, highlighted the importance to not paraphrase the guidance from the Governing Bodies including all Regional Conferences, and stressed the need for FAO to use multilaterally agreed concepts and language, in particular those agreed in FAO Governing Bodies, especially the language used in paragraphs 82, 84, 109 and 111;
- j) appreciated Management's initiative to organize informal consultations with Members on the role and effects of earmarked contributions in delivering the Strategic Framework 2022-31, taking into consideration the request made by the 170th Session of the Council in June 2022;
- k) recognized the need to support FAO's core functions and mandate through resources from its regular budget, stressed that voluntary contributions should be aligned with the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2022-31, and noted that, preferentially, voluntary processes and initiatives should be funded by voluntary contributions;
- l) stressed the importance of funding for the conventions, treaty bodies, and intergovernmental arrangements, as well as the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), and recommended resources to those areas continue to be prioritized;

⁴ C 2021/REP, paragraph 61: The Conference welcomed the Strategic Framework 2022-31 and its strategic narrative of supporting the transformation, that should be encouraged in a coherent manner, as appropriate, in accordance with, and dependent on national contexts and capacities, to achieve MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind, to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and FAO's three Global Goals of Members, while recognizing that the *four betters* identified in the Strategic Framework should be seen and addressed through a food systems approach, with a balance of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development and within the framework of FAO's mandate.

- m) recommended that the Council consider the adjustments to the text of the document C 2023/3 and, accordingly, make recommendations to the Conference; and
- n) noted the areas of proposed programmatic emphasis and de-emphasis, and looked forward to informal consultations with Members before the upcoming 172nd Session of the Council, and to receiving additional documents upon request of Members.

III. Mid-Term Review Synthesis Report – 2022

6. The Committee:

- a) appreciated the progress achieved in implementing the Programme of Work in 2022, and the positive outlook towards full implementation by the end of the biennium;
- b) welcomed the initiatives, mechanisms and approaches that enable the Organization to leverage its expertise, enhance the relevance, quality and timeliness of its contributions and maximize impact, particularly in the face of multiple global challenges;
- c) reiterated the important role of the scientific- and evidence-based normative work of FAO, and welcomed the increased visibility in the Organization of its normative work and its support to standard- setting bodies, in particular, its responsibility for the work of Codex Alimentarius and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC);
- d) recalled paragraph 61 of the Report of the 42nd Session of the Conference: welcomed the Strategic Framework 2022-31 and its strategic narrative of supporting the transformation, that should be encouraged in a coherent manner, as appropriate, in accordance with, and dependent on national contexts and capacities, to achieve MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind, to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and FAO's three Global Goals of Members, while recognizing that the *four betters* identified in the Strategic Framework should be seen and addressed through a food systems approach, with a balance of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development and within the framework of FAO's mandate.
- e) welcomed the Organization's increased visibility and the work on partnerships in maintaining food and agriculture on the global agenda; and
- f) looked forward to further information in the Programme Implementation Report 2022-23 on progress towards the biennial targets and results achieved, and recommended including additional reporting on Indigenous Peoples, climate change, science and innovation, and implementation of UN development system repositioning, and encouraged ongoing emphasis on gender equality dimensions of the Organization's work.

IV. FAO Evaluation Strategy

7. The Committee:

- a) welcomed the Interim Strategy of the Office of Evaluation (OED), noting that the document builds on the experience, technical expertise and commitment of its personnel;
- b) welcomed the new vision and mission of OED, "OneOED", aimed at producing high quality evaluations that meet the needs of FAO stakeholders, and supported the inclusion of capacity development and capacity building at both headquarters and decentralized level;
- c) invited OED to consider expanding its mission statement to include the use of evidence and evidence-based knowledge in decision-making;
- d) stressed the importance of data privacy and data protection in its evaluations, and reiterated the importance of the independence of the evaluation function;
- e) commended the strategic approach that will be used to enhance OED's capacity and delivery of services over the coming years, recognizing the importance of adequate infrastructure and human capital, among others, while the new evaluation policy is developed;
- f) underlined the importance of promoting strategic use of resources, while complying with Governing Bodies' decisions on evaluation coverage;

- g) recommended Council endorse the Interim Strategy of the Office of Evaluation contained in document PC 135/3; and
- h) looked forward to receiving updates at its future sessions.

V. Evaluation of FAO's evaluation function – Terms of Reference (draft)

8. The Committee:

- a) acknowledged the importance of having a formative evaluation that informs the development of the new FAO evaluation policy and serves as a baseline for future assessments of the evaluation function;
- b) highlighted the oversight role of the Programme Committee and Management in the independent evaluation of FAO's evaluation function;
- c) looked forward to finalizing the terms of reference, including the oversight structure, under the leadership of the Chairperson of the Programme Committee, including representation of Management, Members of the Programme Committee and other stakeholders;
- d) highlighted the importance of the independence of the evaluation, and stressed the need to revise the language and terminology utilized in the key questions in the terms of reference to ensure clarity and uniform meaning for all readers, in order to avoid different interpretations;
- e) encouraged gender and geographic balance when establishing the oversight structures as well as the evaluation team;
- f) highlighted the importance of taking into account the Programme Committee membership transitional period during this process; and
- g) recommended the Programme Committee convene a special session to finalize the terms of reference for the Evaluation of FAO evaluation function, under the leadership of the Chairperson of the Programme Committee, with a view to submitting a recommendation to Council as soon as possible.

VI. Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's support to climate action (SDG 13) and the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change (2017)

9. The Committee:

- a) welcomed the *Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's support to climate action (SDG 13) and the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change (2017)*;
- b) commended the consultative process undertaken by FAO Management with FAO Members, which has led to the endorsement of an ambitious vision (recommendation 1) and a new Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 (recommendation 2);
- c) acknowledged the importance of the Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 and its Action Plan in supporting the implementation of recommendations 3 to 12, and appreciated the steps already taken by FAO Management to achieve them;
- d) appreciated the increased recognition of the importance of adaptation of agrifood systems to climate change and encouraged FAO to continue its advocacy efforts in this regard;
- e) stressed the need for FAO to increase support to developing countries in accessing climate funding, particularly grants;
- f) encouraged FAO to increase recognition of the contribution of national and local actors, particularly Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and micro- and smallholder farmers, to climate action, including by supporting these groups to access climate finance; and
- g) requested that in future climate related work, including, but not limited to, the Action Plan under development, FAO include, as possible and when necessary, regionally balanced academic representation during expert consultation processes, to capture different approaches, knowledge and needs, based on countries' capacities, in the production of documents on climate related issues linked to agrifood systems, natural resources, food security and nutrition.

VII. Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's role and work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

10. The Committee:

- a) welcomed the *Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's role and work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)* and appreciated the actions taken to progress on the implementation of the Evaluation recommendations, and the impact and changes achieved with these activities;
- b) acknowledged the progress made by FAO in implementing the Action Plan on AMR 2021-2025 and the support it has provided to countries in minimizing and containing AMR for more resilient and sustainable agrifood systems; and
- c) requested FAO to strengthen its efforts towards the achievement of the objectives of the Action Plan on AMR 2021-2025 to further promote the responsible use of antimicrobial agents and to enable the adoption of good practices, in a manner that is coherent and fully aligned with the deliberations of its Governing Bodies, and to report on progress to the appropriate Technical Committees.

VIII. Update on water resources management

11. The Committee:

- a) appreciated the update provided and acknowledged the progress made on FAO's engagement in and collaboration on integrated water resources management (IWRM);
- b) noted FAO's custodianship of indicators 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 of SDG 6, and encouraged FAO to further address water efficiency and water stress, in line with its mandate, while contributing to the lines of work of UN-Water;
- c) recognized that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions to IWRM, and underscored that this should be one guiding principle in FAO's work in this area;
- d) welcomed FAO's role as co-lead of the UN-Water Task Force on country level engagement, providing key support on national water roadmaps;
- e) supported the priorities in 2023 listed in the document PC 135/7 on IWRM and encouraged FAO to continue implementing programmatic initiatives with Members to advance IWRM in agrifood systems;
- f) encouraged FAO to continue its technical leadership and expertise, within its mandate, to further strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration, with emphasis on water use efficiency, taking into account the impact of qualitative and quantitative dimensions;
- g) recalled the need to ensure that regional balance be respected whenever external stakeholders are involved in the discussion of substantive matters or the preparation of documents;
- h) recognized the fruitful collaboration with other relevant UN agencies, and highlighted the need to ensure there are no overlapping efforts;
- i) acknowledged that FAO's actions in IWRM need to include Indigenous Peoples' approaches; and
- j) looked forward to FAO's broad engagement with Members at the UN 2023 Water Conference, and invited FAO to inform on its outcomes and follow-up actions.

IX. Update on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative (Item for information)

12. The Committee:

- a) underlined the increasing demand from Members, in particular their need for additional technical and financial support, and commended the progress achieved and the positive impact being catalysed by the Hand-in-Hand Initiative on the ground in beneficiary countries, in support of their national priorities;
- b) welcomed the increase in the number of countries joining the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, including improved regional balance, to 60 Members by March 2023;

- c) appreciated the ongoing, improved flow of information and progress through the updated website and briefings to Members; and
- d) welcomed the organization of the Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum back-to-back with the FAO Science and Innovation Forum, and looked forward to repeating its celebration.

X. Update on FAO's private sector engagement (Item for information)

13. The Committee:

- a) took note of the overview of diverse types of private sector engagements, and stressed the importance of having a selected portfolio of strategic partnerships which are balanced in terms of geographical coverage, thematic areas of engagement, types and size of entities and deliver concrete, beneficiary-oriented impacts;
- b) welcomed the progress made:
 - i. towards the establishment and operationalization of a due diligence system - the Framework for Due Diligence and Risk Assessment/Management (FRAME);
 - ii. in professionalizing and digitalizing the management of the private sector engagements via the CONNECT Portal and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system; and
 - iii. in holding the first meeting of the Private Sector Advisory Group (PSAG) on 31 January 2023;
- c) recalled the definition of partnerships in the Strategy for Private Sector Engagement, encouraged the ongoing commitment to transparency and underscored the importance to publish updated information on the CONNECT Portal; and
- d) noted with appreciation the continuing work to develop the capacity of FAO personnel to engage with the private sector, especially at the decentralized level, through online webinars and other trainings, as appropriate.

XI. Update on FAO statistics work for SDG indicators and the UN Statistical Commission (Item for information)

14. The Committee:

- a) reiterated the importance of using internationally agreed SDG indicators to monitor targets related to food and agriculture;
- b) welcomed the document and the update provided in the addendum, noted that a final decision on the interim use of the proxies proposed by FAO will be made at future sessions of the Interagency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators (IAEG-SDG) meetings, while a final decision on whether to replace the official indicator with the proxy indicator shall be considered in the context of the 2025 Comprehensive Review of the SDG indicator framework;
- c) further welcomed Management's commitment to convene an informal briefing with Members in 2023 and additional consultations in this regard prior to further implementation of the proxy measures;
- d) stressed the need for FAO to provide consistent and timely information, including statistics, taking into consideration the needs of Members, and requested that FAO include, as possible and when necessary, regionally balanced academic representation during expert consultation processes, to capture different approaches, knowledge and needs based on countries' capacities;
- e) encouraged Management to engage proactively in the 2025 Comprehensive Review of the SDG indicator framework, and keep Members informed ahead of relevant deliberations and decisions; and
- f) commended FAO for its work on strengthening the statistical capacity of countries in producing food and agriculture statistics and requested further efforts to support countries in increasing their capacity to collect and assess data of official SDG indicators by building capacity and voluntary technology transfer on mutually agreed terms.

XII. Update on the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 (Item for information)

15. The Committee:
- a) welcomed the information provided on the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change, the actions taken since its endorsement by the 170th Session of the Council in June 2022, and the update on the development of its Action Plan for the effective implementation of the Strategy;
 - b) acknowledged that the Action Plan will be a living document, aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and the Strategy on Climate Change, commended Management's efforts to take into account Members' feedback, and recognized that progress reporting will be fully aligned with corporate programme reporting processes;
 - c) welcomed the introduction of a crosscutting outcome on the enhancement of FAO's operational modalities in the Action Plan, and encouraged FAO to enhance resource mobilization to support the implementation of the Strategy on Climate Change;
 - d) underlined the importance, in the context of the Action Plan, for the Organization to provide support to developing countries to access financial resources and technical assistance to carry out adaptation and mitigation measures at scale through leveraging evolving financing sources and mechanisms;
 - e) stressed the importance of the Action Plan to address the Strategy on Climate Change and, among others, the promotion of voluntary technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and sharing of knowledge, practices and research to adapt to climate change; and
 - f) further encouraged FAO, within its mandate, to intensify engagement at country level including to ensure, where possible, that FAO's climate change approach is integrated within UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

XIII. Update on the implementation of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy (Item for information)

16. The Committee:
- a) welcomed the update on the implementation of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy;
 - b) acknowledged the Action Plan for the Science and Innovation Strategy is a living document that can be updated and adapted to reflect important developments, aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy, and recognized that reporting on the implementation of the Strategy will be fully aligned with corporate programme reporting processes and with other corporate strategies;
 - c) recalled the importance of fostering in the Science and Innovation Action Plan a range of scientific and technological fields, described in paragraph 3 of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy, contained in Appendix D of the Report of the 170th Session of the Council;
 - d) recognized the need for a multiplicity of options and solutions of science and innovation in the Action Plan;
 - e) stressed the need to promote innovations and technologies aimed at fostering the development and strengthening of local and traditional agrifood systems, especially those produced by local producers and Indigenous Peoples, leaving no one behind;
 - f) recognized the importance of Indigenous Peoples' involvement and knowledge in the Action Plan;
 - g) stressed the importance of incorporating global, regional and inter-regional perspectives into FAO's work on science and innovation, appreciated Management's efforts to take into account Members' feedback on the draft Action Plan, and encouraged Management to continue the process in particular with the FAO Regional Groups.

XIV. Progress report on the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025 (Item for information)

17. The Committee:

- a) welcomed the progress made in advancing the implementation of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025);
- b) acknowledged the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN) as a contribution to the Decade, and welcomed that FAO developed an evidence platform for agrifood systems and nutrition in order to support countries and partners in operationalizing the ICN2 recommendations;
- c) recommended an addition of the term “industrially produced” in front of “Trans-fat elimination protected 3.2 billion people from those harmful substances by end 2021” in paragraph 34 to ensure the correct concept is used consistently; and
- d) encouraged FAO, jointly with WHO, to convene open and inclusive dialogues towards the end of the Decade for reflection on global progress and challenges encountered and identification of potential way forward beyond 2025.

XV. Tentative Agenda for the 136th Session of the Programme Committee (Item for information)

18. Having regard to Rule III of the Rules of Procedure of the Programme Committee, the Committee took note of document PC 135/INF/7.

XVI. Date and place of the next session

19. The Committee noted the possibility of holding a special session before the 172nd Session of the Council, took note of the proposed dates for its next regular Session, to be held from 6 to 10 November 2023, and acknowledged that the arrangements for the session would be established in accordance with the evolving COVID-19 restrictions.

XVII. Any Other Matters

20. The Committee took note of the oral presentation of FAO’s work on livestock, delivered by the Director of the Animal Production and Health Division.