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Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Food and Agriculture Policy

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

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Acronyms

ADG	Assistant Director General (FAO Department heads)
AFAORep	Assistant FAO Country Representative
AG	Agriculture Department
AGA	Animal Production and Health Division
AGAL	Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch
AGN	Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division
AGP	Plant Production and Protection Division
AGPM	(same as AGP)
AGS	Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division
ALM	Adaptation Learning Mechanisms (a UNDP/GEF website)
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BEFS	Bio-Energy and Food Security Programme (FAO)
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Programme
CD	Capacity development
CFS	UN Committee on World Food Security
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COAG	Committee on Agriculture (FAO)
CoC-IEE	Conference Committee on Follow-up to the IEE
COFI	Committee on Fisheries (FAO)
COFO	Committee on Forestry (FAO)
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CP	Country programming
CPF	Country Programming Framework (FAO)
DDG	Deputy Director General
DDG-K	Deputy Director General-Knowledge
DDG-O	Deputy Director General-Operations
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DG	Director General
DO	Decentralised office
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EASYPOL	FAO website of resources for policy makers
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMPRES	Emergency Prevention System for transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases (FAO)
ES	Economic and Social Development Department
ESA	Agricultural Development Economics Division
ESD	Office of the ADG of ES
EST	Trade and Markets Division
ESW	Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division
EU	European Union
FAORep	FAO Country Representative
FAOSTAT	The FAO food and agricultural statistics database
FAPDA	Food and Agricultural Policy Decision Analysis Tool (FAO initiative)
FI	Fisheries Department (FAO)
FIP	Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Economics Division
FNPP	FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme
FO	Forestry Department (FAO)
FOE	Forestry Economics, Policy and Products Division
FPMIS	Field Programme Management Information System
FTN	Functional Technical Network

GAFFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GEF	Global Environment Fund
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System
GMO	Genetically modified organism
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human resources
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IDWG	Inter-departmental working group
IEE	Independent External Evaluation of FAO (2007)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International financial institution
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute (part of CGIAR)
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (an association of 6 E. African countries)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Immediate Plan of Action for Follow-up to the IEE
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPM	Integrated pest management
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MAFAP	Monitoring African Food and Agricultural Policies (FAO project)
MAfFS	Mapping Actions for Food Security (FAO project)
MDF	Multidisciplinary Development Fund
MICCA	Mitigation of Climate Change in Agriculture Programme (FAO)
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MTP	Medium-term plan
NENA	Near East and North Africa
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NFP	National Forest Programme
NMTPF	National Medium Term Planning Framework (old name of the CPF)
NPFS/RPFS	National/Regional Programme for Food Security
NR	Natural Resources Department (FAO)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (UK)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
OEK	FAO Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension
OIE	World Organization for Animal Health
OR	Organizational result (FAO planning framework)
OSP	FAO Office for Strategy, Planning and Resource Management
PC	Programme Committee (FAO)
PIP	Policy Intelligence and Preparedness
PPP	Public-private partnership
PWB	Programme of Work and Budget
RAF	Regional Office for Africa (FAO)
RAP	Regional Office for Asia (FAO)
REIO	Regional Economic Integration Organization
REU	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO)
RLC	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO)
RNE	Regional Office for the Near East (FAO)
RO	Regional Office
RP	Regular Programme (of FAO)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAP	Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific (FAO)
SEC	Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia (FAO)

SEU	Sub-Regional Office for Europe (FAO)
SF	Strategic Framework
SFE	Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (FAO)
SFS	Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa (FAO)
SFW	Sub-Regional Office for West Africa (FAO)
SLC	Sub-Regional Office for Central America (FAO)
SLS	Multidisciplinary Team for South America (Santiago)
SME	Small and medium enterprises
SNE	Subregional Office for North Africa (Tunis)
SNO	Multidisciplinary Team for the Oriental Near East (Cairo)
SOFA	The State of the Food and Agriculture (FAO flagship publication)
SOFI	The State of the Food Insecurity in the World (FAO flagship publication)
SOFIA	The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (FAO flagship publication)
SOFO	The State of the World's Forests (FAO flagship publication)
SRO	Sub-Regional Office
TC	Technical Cooperation Department
TCA	old acronym for TCS
TCE	Emergency and Rehabilitation Division
TCER	Rehabilitation and Humanitarian Policy Branch
TCI	FAO Investment Centre
TCS	Policy and Programme Support Division
TCSF	Integrated Food Security Support Service
TCSP	Policy Assistance Support Service
UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UN-ECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-HLTF	UN High Level Task Force
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US Dollar
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

- i. Policy work, in its many and varied dimensions, is among the most important things that FAO does. But has this work been (a) effective and (b) done as well as possible? The answers as identified in this evaluation are, respectively, (a) Somewhat and (b) Not in all respects! Late in a period of active reform, it is a good time to address this demanding question in the detail set out in these chapters and provide cogent evaluative analysis to help the Organization identify ways to make future better than the recent past.
- ii. The world of food and agriculture is a large, complex and increasingly uncertain one; it is natural that FAO reflects such attributes, and to the extent that this evaluation addresses policy work in such a multifaceted environment, it has its own complexities, not readily captured in a short Summary. Accordingly, the Team sincerely hopes that busy readers will go beyond this cryptic Summary and delve into the “internal organs” of the evaluation. It is not that the Team thinks that it has managed to unravel all the internal anatomy for public display but, through its wide-ranging country visits, FAO staff interviews, dialogue with development partners, and discussions with other stakeholders, it gathered a mass of material that forms the basis of the judgments assembled herein.
- iii. Chapter 1 sets the scene for the evaluation by charting both the centrality of policy work to the FAO mission and the pervasiveness of such work through the Organization. A set of frameworks for examining policy processes is introduced in chapter 2 to help the evaluation Team to observe not only where and how FAO is providing support, but also to analyse how such support might be provided more effectively in order to achieve FAO's global goals of hunger and poverty reduction while addressing environmental sustainability. The Team humbly suggests the reader looks over the frameworks depicted in Figures 1, 2 and 3, as they cannot be repeated in this succinct summary. As well as identifying the more or less separable elements of policy processes (the “Policy Daisy” of Figure 2), it is clarified in Figure 3 that three corporate aspects are essential to consider: the institutional set-up of policy work, the human and financial resources deployed for policy work, and the management of policy work.
- iv. The role and organization of FAO's policy work is overviewed in chapter 3. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings from past evaluations. The findings from this evaluation are mostly presented in chapter 5. Chapter 6 analyses how corporate characteristics influence performance observed. Chapter 7 assembles the recommendations arising from this evaluation.
- v. The findings of the evaluation set out in chapter 5 are first arranged for policy work at global, regional and country levels, and are then discussed with regard to FAO's role in different stages of the policy process, taking the Policy Daisy as a conceptual framework.
- vi. According to its mandate and the expectations on its Members, at the **global level** FAO should provide an authoritative, objective, respected and politically neutral international platform where the issues of hunger, malnutrition, poverty and environmental degradation (including climate change) can be examined and decisions taken for collective action. This evaluation finds that has delivered in this challenging domain remarkably well and satisfactorily. There are many specific achievements that can be noted, including the regular flagships, SOFA since 2003-04 and SOFI since 2008. As well, there are important achievements in Sub-sectoral policy, including notable global instruments (Voluntary Guidelines, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources) and the effective servicing of a revitalized Committee on World Food Security. As the publication record of the ESA shows, FAO has been able to conduct globally relevant policy work on important agricultural policy issues, such as the food price crisis, climate change, payment for environmental services and seed systems. EST (which was subject to a separate evaluation in 2007) continues to provide highly relevant policy research and analysis on agricultural commodities as well as the agricultural dimension of international trade, with a particular focus on the WTO negotiations. Examples of FAO's ability to take leadership in global policy debates

include the impact of FAO's work on "climate-smart agriculture" in climate negotiations, the impact of FAO's trade policy analysis on WTO negotiations, and the role of FAO's price volatility work for the recent G20 debates. In line with earlier policy evaluations, this evaluation also concludes that the quality of FAO's policy research and analysis compares favourably in quality to that of other international organizations that conduct applied agricultural policy research and analysis and provide policy assistance.

- vii. *The major technical Departments (AG, FO, FI and NR)* and the Legal Office also conduct important global policy work. Important policy areas for them include the support to FAO's respective Committees on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the promotion of global instruments, such as voluntary guidelines, e.g., the Code of Conduct on Sustainable Fisheries and the (under negotiation) Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and other Natural Resources. The respective departments are also in charge of monitoring and supporting progress on implementation of such instruments. They also link with other UN organizations and with other global standard-setting bodies, such as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). FAO's standard-setting with through the Codex Alimentarius, a joint undertaking with the World Health Organization (WHO), is another example of FAO's important and successfully implemented global policy work. Achievements concerning a diversity of other important global activities and knowledge products are positively elaborated in chapter 5. The Team noted, however, that FAO has been less successful in taking on a global leadership role on the question of malnutrition, even though this topic is also squarely within FAO's mandate.
- viii. Many of the client countries visited by the Team indicated that FAO does usefully help to represent their interests in the global arena. Overall, FAO's role in bringing developing-country issues to the fore in the global discourse is greatly appreciated, according to most of the informants interviewed in the evaluation, whether officials in Member Countries, less developed and other, or in the several international agencies consulted. The evaluation strongly recommends protecting the excellent global policy work that FAO was able to build up during the past decade (see **Recommendation 1**). But there are risks to be managed. The evaluation notes that, to maintain FAO's strong reputation for its flagship reports, the new flagships, even if they are not "officially designated flagships," should undergo the same rigorous standards for external peer review, as well as for internal review across divisions and departments.
- ix. Comparative advantage for policy work at **country level** is a rather different story from that noted for the global level work. The Team's country visits indicate that: FAO is better suited than any other organization to help developing countries identify, adopt and implement the policies that address hunger, poverty and sustainability. FAO is better suited than others because it enjoys unmatched trust, access and ownership, as well as presence in all developing countries; and it has technical knowledge in all fields of agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries that no other organization has and it can play the role of a global knowledge broker.
- x. But FAO does **not**, however, provide a leading role in policy support at country level, even though FAO is very close to governments. There is insufficient back-stopping of FAO-Reps to be able to engage in high-quality policy dialogue. Policy work by the consultants to whom much of the work is entrusted is of uneven quality. Regrettably, there is no systematic "policy intelligence" that country teams can rely on. Donors, and often WFP, are particularly critical of FAO's limited ability or willingness to engage in policy dialogue. The recently introduced Country Programming Framework may yet provide a useful basis, but it was perhaps too early to judge by the time the Team completed its field work.
- xi. Why these observed performance problems at country level? Lack of organizational accountability and incentives to deliver policy advice at country level appear to be the major problems, and these are linked to the nature of policy work undertaken. "Problem pressure" not being as prevalent as in, e.g., Avian Influenza, is likely one important aspect. The Team observed a difficulty to link concrete policy changes to FAO policy assistance, a situation surely aggravated

by the limited incentives of governments to create accountability. Too, requests for policy documents often come from donors. Among the findings elaborated in chapter 5, the Team identified a lack of provisions for quality control and accountability in the decentralization policy implemented. Policy officers in decentralized offices are seen as generalists and are too often used for administrative work, essentially becoming assistants of regional/sub-regional coordinators, a situation of unfortunate “capture” of policy staff.

- xii. The complexity of the analysis of FAO's fragmented institutional arrangements for policy work is such that succinct summary of the arguments and options elaborated in chapter 6 would not do justice to the considerations presented there. Rather, the major conclusions of the Team can be compactly presented through the relevant recommendations drawn from that analysis
- xiii. The recommendations of the evaluation can be summarized as follows:
- xiv. **Recommendation 1.1: FAO should protect the excellent policy work conducted at global level.**
 - Examples include SOFA/SOFI, the Global Perspectives work and global policy instruments, such as voluntary guidelines and codes of conduct.
- xv. **Recommendation 1.2: FAO needs to set clear priorities for its role in country-level policy assistance.**
 - FAO needs to focus on countries that need FAO policy assistance most, rather than presuming that FAO can do everything everywhere.
 - FAO should focus on activities that have the highest impact on food-insecure people, taking FAO's capacity to deliver into account.
- xvi. **Recommendation 1.3: To guide FAO's priority-setting and strategic management of policy assistance, it is recommended that Management articulates a detailed vision and strategic approach,** which is based on a thorough analysis of FAO's comparative advantage as a global organization as well as its mandate.
- xvii. **Recommendation 1.4: FAO can and should play a leading role in changing the way that policy formulation support is provided,** particularly through a better analytical basis and a more strategic and more stakeholder-participatory facilitation, and with on-going engagement of its consultants and staff, so that there is greater country ownership and consequently a better chance of policies being sustainably implemented.
- xviii. **Recommendation 2.1: FAO needs to strengthen the accountability for the performance and impact of its country-level policy assistance, since this is a prerequisite for any other reform effort to work.**
 - Measure 1: Create a Policy Intelligence and Preparedness (PIP) system at the country level
 - Measure 2: Define country-specific impact pathways and results for policy assistance
 - Measure 3: Strengthen the accountability for policy assistance impact through incentives and performance management involving the Regional Conferences and FAOReps
 - Measure 4: Develop a system to monitor the impact of policy assistance at country level
1. **Recommendation 2.2: FAO needs to address the horizontal and vertical fragmentation of policy work in its institutional structure.** After carefully considering the costs involved in restructuring, the evaluation Team came to the conclusion that the most promising option to address the long-standing fragmentation problem consists in the following measures:
 - a) In order to **consolidate its policy work and at the same time increase the capacity for policy assistance at the country level** using existing resources, the Policy Assistance and Food Security Support Services (TCSP and TCSF) should partly be shifted to the ES Department, and partly to decentralized offices. This recommendation is best implemented as

part of the already currently ongoing reform process, and it needs to be combined with the implementation of Recommendation 2.2 to be effective. The level of decentralization at which additional capacity for policy assistance should be created (regional, subregional or selected priority countries) needs to be carefully decided on a case-by-case basis.

- b) To support the policy assistance work at the country level, FAO should experiment with the creation of formal **Functional Technical Networks (FTNs) or alternative informal structures** that focus on policy advice in subregions and/or in selected high-priority countries.
- c) FAO should implement a policy of **requiring staff in policy units at HQ to “sell” a specified share of their time to country policy assistance activities**, encouraging staff to focus on a set of countries or a region over a sustained number of years in order to build context-specific knowledge and networks and to ensure long term capacity development.
- xix. **Recommendation 3: FAO should create an “impact assessment culture”** with particular emphasis on assessing the impact of its country-level policy work and require all units doing policy work to document evidence trails for impact assessment
- **OED should incorporate into its regular program at least three policy impact assessments per year,**
 - focusing on case studies judged to have the best prospects for institutional learning and accountability.
- xx. **Recommendation 4: FAO managers of policy work consider the analytical capabilities of their staffs to identify gaps in skills that would be relevant in dealing more adequately with uncertainty in policy analysis and investment planning.**
- FAO should identify methods needed to close gaps and organize appropriate training for staff.
 - Alliances with other international organizations and national research institutes may prove to be effective for fruitful collaboration in this challenging dimension of policy work.
- xxi. **Recommendation 5: FAO should continue to innovate in and expand the emphasis on its e-engagement efforts in order to extend its communications regarding policy.**
- At the same time, FAO needs to invest in fostering uptake, e.g., in the capacity, especially of national level policy actors, to demand, access and use the policy material that is made available through websites.
 - FAO should also consolidate its various efforts to provide tools for policy monitoring by using one common platform.
- xxii. **Recommendation 6: FAO should create a central focus in its technical work on addressing more systematically the enabling environment of policies, institutions, legislation** that are essential for the uptake of technical solutions. Strengthen the capability of technical units to **provide countries with alternative options** that are assessed from economic, social and environmental perspectives rather than pushing “one-size-fits-all” solutions.
- xxiii. The evaluation Team counts itself as privileged indeed to have had this opportunity to observe an important Organization tackling important work at an important time. In fact, considering the recent and prospective global food and agriculture situation, the Team feels that FAO's role and work in policy is more important than ever. Agriculture and food security have returned to the center stage of the international development policy arena. There are impressive examples that achieving “zero hunger” is possible in this world in our lifetime. Yet, ultimately, “all politics is local” – and to achieve its three goals – fighting hunger, using agriculture for poverty reduction and achieving environmental sustainability, policy change needs to happen at the country level. Here, FAO has a unique potential to assist the governments that place so much trust in “their” FAO, but the Organization has not been using this potential effectively. As FAO is in the middle of a renewal process and at the beginning of a new phase of leadership, it has a unique

opportunity to resolve the long-standing institutional and managerial problems affecting its policy work. The policy window for FAO's own policy change is now open, but for how long?

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

2. Policy work is among the most important things that FAO does. "FAO lends its years of experience to member countries in devising agricultural policy, supporting planning, drafting effective legislation and creating national strategies to achieve rural development and hunger alleviation goals."¹ But has this work been effective and as well done as possible? Late in a period of active reform, it is high time to address this question and, as necessary, grasp the nettle of betterment for the future. To help seize this opportunity is the ambition of this evaluation.

1.1.1 Policy: a Core Function of FAO

3. Policy is one of the eight "Core Functions" that FAO has identified as cross-cutting approaches that underpin its work in achieving its Strategic Objectives.² These Core Functions draw on the Organization's comparative advantages and are to be applied at all levels: global, regional and national. As presented in the FAO Strategic Framework 2010-19 and in the Medium-Term Plan 2010-13, Core Function D on Policy is described as follows:

Box 1: Core Function D: Articulating policy and strategy options and advice

"This core function is closely interlinked with other core functions. It seeks to meet growing demand for policy assistance. FAO needs to articulate policy and strategy options based on available evidence and its assessments of trends in food security and agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Members and their Regional Economic Integration Organizations (REIOs) are expected to require and demand policy advisory services which build on the knowledge available in FAO (as well as obtained through its partners).

The array of policy and legislative assistance work includes:

- policy advice,
- capacity development for policy formulation and implementation,
- institutional strengthening and restructuring,
- country information,
- policy intelligence and monitoring, and
- identification of Members' priorities for effective field programme development.

A strong policy assistance node involving all concerned units should contribute to achieving this [*the evaluation notes that such a node does not exist*].

In the legal area, policy and strategy options are formulated with an eye on strengthening binding and non-binding international regulatory frameworks, with appropriate partnerships where joint action is needed. Besides the essential contribution of standards and other national legal instruments to these frameworks, advocacy and communication tools are to mobilise political will to foster effective implementation.

In the application of this core function, it will be important:

- to build and maintain institutional knowledge on policy and strategy options and avoid fragmented approaches;
- hence, identify and analyse cross-cutting issues and privilege multi-disciplinarity in such strategy options

¹ <http://www.fao.org/about/en/> (Accessed 1 Jan. 2012)

² In addition to the specific policy Core Function (D), much of what is contained in several other Core Functions is closely or directly related to policy work, especially Core Functions 'A' (long-term perspectives and trends), 'C' (negotiating international instruments), and 'F' (undertaking advocacy and mobilising political will).

and advice;

- to enhance further capacity development in countries to enable them to implement well-tailored policies, as well as effective tools for their implementation;
- to engage in regular consultations with public and private stakeholders;
- to share widely guidelines and best practices on the development of policy; and
- to participate proactively in other international fora where policy and instruments with bearing on FAO's mandate, are conceived and adopted.”

Source: FAO 2009, p. 15; bullet points in first paragraph added

4. According to the Strategic Framework and the Medium-Term Plan 2010-13, this Core Function appears as truly cross-cutting across FAO's work: it is identified as a key element for achieving no less than 41 of the 49 Organizational Results (ORs) developed for implementation of FAO's 11 Strategic Objectives. Even among the eight ORs that do not list it, at least five refer to improved planning and strategy development among the OR indicators.

1.1.2 *Definition of Policy Adopted for This Evaluation*

5. Policy is a term used by FAO staff (and others) to refer to a wide range of concepts and activities Taking FAO's strategic documents and feedback from FAO management and staff into account, the following definitions were adopted for purpose of this evaluation:
 - The term “food and agricultural policies” refers to the strategies, frameworks and norms underpinning courses of action, regulatory measures, laws, and funding priorities in the food and agriculture sector, broadly defined to include fisheries and forestry.³
 - FAO's food and agriculture policy work is defined as those activities that support or engage in the assembly, generation and distribution of policy knowledge, the analysis of policy options, including legal and investment options, the formulation, negotiation, adoption, and implementation of policies, and the evaluation of policies and the assessment of their impact. Capacity development, including institutional strengthening, is seen as an essential element in all of these activities. FAO's policy work takes place at global, regional, national and local levels.
6. While this definition of FAO's policy work is inevitably broad, it helps to understand the extent to which policy work runs through a large part of both the normative and the country-assistance work of FAO. The further discussion in the next section hopefully helps to delimit this wide concept of FAO policy work and thus also the scope of the evaluation itself. The conceptual framework developed for this evaluation (see Chapter 2) shows how the concept of policy work is “disentangled” for the purpose of this evaluation.

1.1.3 *Types of FAO Policy Work*

7. While all FAO technical divisions work for policy change in one way or another, this evaluation focuses work whose specific purpose is to contribute to improved policy processes. Therefore, *for the purpose of this evaluation*, an effort was made to distinguish between the technological underpinnings of sound development policies – the subject of much of the policy advice from FAO technical divisions – and direct contributions to the policy process itself. This delineation still leaves the span of the evaluation wide indeed and, given the finite resources available to the evaluation and the sheer inability to address every aspect of such work within the Organization,

³ The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines policy as “a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions.”

some selectivity is inevitable and a deliberate attempt is made to focus on aspects of the food and agricultural policy work that are judged to be the most significant.⁴

8. Over the years, FAO's policy work has evolved. It is currently principally provided in the following forms:⁵
 - i. as a "knowledge organization" providing a **forum for information and knowledge exchange** on policies (e.g., analyses of policy issues and options, reviews of best practice, global or regional conferences/workshops on key policy issues such as, e.g., bioenergy and biofuel policy.)
 - ii. as a **forum for negotiation of intergovernmental policy commitments** (e.g., treaties, conventions, setting of norms and standards, such as the Codex Alimentarius, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, etc.)
 - iii. as a **provider of policy information, intelligence and preparedness** (anticipating emerging policy issues and developing the Organization's capacity to respond to them. Examples include food security preparedness or food price volatility information.)
 - iv. through **advocacy for global or regional policy issues and calls for action** (such as calls against food export bans, or for investment in agricultural research and extension.)
 - v. through **direct policy advice to Member Countries**, including support to **national policy processes** and to **policy implementation** (e.g., support for the preparation of a national food security strategy.)
 - vi. through **institutional capacity enhancement to bolster policy formulation** (e.g., capacity development to support nationally-led agricultural change processes or the establishment of an office/unit for agricultural policy.)

1.1.4 Why and why now?

9. This evaluation was requested by the FAO Programme Committee at its 103rd session (March 2010) in view of the time elapsed since the previous evaluations (in 2001 and the IEE in 2007) as well as the changed and changing FAO and client contexts. The report of the evaluation will be presented at the 110th session of the Programme Committee in May 2012.
10. The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess the capacity, role and comparative advantage of FAO in providing policy support to the global community in the areas of its mandate. It seeks to evaluate the extent to which FAO has addressed Core Function D (and policy-related elements in the other Core Functions) in its work at global, regional and national levels, and consider the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of FAO's policy work in the period since the 2001 Evaluation of Policy Assistance. It also seeks to assess FAO's internal structure and mechanisms for carrying out its policy functions and its mechanisms for communicating policy outputs, both internally and externally, particularly in the light of the analysis of the IEE and of the on-going progress of the follow-up Immediate Plan of Action (IPA). Another reason why this exercise was considered important now is FAO's transition to a new Director-General during the latter part of the evaluation.

⁴ Depending on the policy domains being considered, the evaluation (as does FAO itself) at times steps out of the narrow "food and agricultural policy" area to consider broader policies *affecting* food and agriculture.

⁵ Slightly modified from the list developed in the "FAO Policy Assistance Paper" final draft of March 2008 – this was a document produced by an ad-hoc group of FAO senior professionals as input to the work of the Conference Committee on follow-up to the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of FAO presented to the Council in 2007.

11. The evaluation is informed by other relevant recent major FAO evaluations.⁶ The evaluation addresses the future of FAO's global policy role, the internal organization of policy work, and the approach to policy assistance to the Member Countries.
12. As a primarily strategic (process) exercise, this evaluation looks less at the substantive content of FAO policy work than at the institutional role, capacities and processes through which FAO undertakes its policy work, although content is naturally important and cannot be ignored.

1.2 Scope and Objectives

13. The most important issues and areas of investigation for the evaluation are briefly noted in this section.
14. **Integration with global and regional policy initiatives:** At global and also regional levels, the evaluation considers the coherence and relationship between FAO's policy work and global and regional policy initiatives. At regional level, it considers coordination with and support to regional economic bodies.
15. **The right policies for whom?:** FAO as a UN presence and source of policy support in member countries has three - occasionally conflicting - obligations: (a) to respond to demand and provide policy assistance according to national priorities (in line with the Paris Declaration), (b) to bring 'global public goods' and 'global governance' issues in the areas of its mandate to national attention, and (c) to be a part of UN system country coordination processes (UNDAF, Delivering-as-One) and the priorities which emerge from them. The evaluation also addresses the related question of how FAO deals with situations where the priorities concerning smallholder farmers, female farmers, food-insecure people and other groups with limited political voice are not well represented in national agricultural policy and absent from the international stage.
16. A related issue of concern is the positioning of FAO's policy work between knowledge creation (i.e., policy research) and knowledge management (provision of specific policy support to governments). The line dividing research from practical application is a fuzzy one, and even the key texts of the Organization seem in different places to indicate different corporate policies in this area. The evaluation analyses this issue through a scheme (a "Policy Daisy" – see Chapter 2) for conceptualizing different elements of a "policy cycle" that could be supported by FAO work.
17. **Being proactive and being relevant:** A further issue is the ability of FAO to be proactive in identifying critical emerging global policy issues. Does FAO invest too much in being the best (but more passive) source of information and capacity development, and too little in analysis of this information to identify trends? Apart from proactivity per se, there is the question of the *relevance* of the scope of FAO's policy work: are the big and right issues being adequately addressed?
18. **FAO policy support - the larger picture and comparative advantage:** Policy objectives and outcomes in agriculture, rural development and food security are closely inter-related with

⁶See the "Meta-synthesis of Past Evaluations" in Annex 7, including in particular the Independent Evaluation of FAO Corporate Strategic Objective B1 (International Instruments), the Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Statistics, the Joint Thematic Evaluation of FAO and WFP Support to Information Systems for Food Security, and the 2010 Strategic Evaluation of FAO Country Programming (which led to what is now known as the Country Programming Framework [CPF], about which this evaluation has much to say), among several others of relevance.

policy activities in many other areas of development work. However, FAO's historical link to the ministries of agriculture within its Member Countries often means that FAO access to government processes is only (or at least mainly) through the Ministry of Agriculture.⁷ The evaluation actively considered the consequences of this on its policy support work. This also carries over to the corporate governance level, where agriculture ministries are the only ones represented in FAO's Governing Bodies and therefore the ones setting agency priorities. At global level, FAO's role is often close to those of other agencies and bodies, resulting sometimes in collaboration or complementarity, but other times in overlap, redundancy and competition for resources and for attention. The issue of comparative advantage was considered in this context.

19. **Corporate issues with respect to policy work - Skills and capacity:** An issue considered by the evaluation is the staff skills and capacity mix that would ideally be needed for provision of effective policy advice and assistance. FAO recruitment is often driven largely by technical-scientific capacity, even though the work carried out generally has a strong policy element. This could result in 'technology-driven' responses to policy problems, and a limited capacity to identify policy options that are politically feasible and will, in fact, be implemented.
20. **Corporate issues with respect to policy work - Institutional structure, "silo culture" and decentralization:** The way in which policy work is organized within the different departments of FAO has raised concerns in earlier evaluations, including the Independent External Evaluation (IEE). A 'silo' culture, poor inter-departmental and inter-divisional cooperation, and lack of information sharing and collaboration, have been identified as challenges for the Organization. As further explained in Chapter 4 and Section 6.3.1, the far-reaching organizational changes recommended in earlier evaluations, most prominently the IEE, have never been implemented. Against this background, this evaluation considers whether and to what extent the concerns identified in earlier evaluations have indeed remained problems for FAO policy work. The current decentralization process has led to additional changes in the organizational set-up of FAO's policy work, the effects of which have not been assessed, so far. Therefore, this evaluation also assesses the interaction between the different levels of the Organization for policy assistance, and considers the changes underway in these interactions that are being implemented in the reform process.
21. **Corporate issues with respect to policy work - Corporate policy positions:** In the area of advocacy and communication, there is an issue of consistency of corporate messages to policy makers and the need to have policy positions on controversial issues of the day. The evaluation attempts to assess the ability of (or need for) the agency to maintain consistency of corporate messages in policy support.

1.3 Evaluation Criteria

22. The evaluation examined FAO's policy work at global, regional and country level according to standard evaluation criteria:

- 1. Relevance and responsiveness** to Members' needs and global imperatives for policy support, including:

- a. the extent to which policy work has reflected FAO commitments in the old (2000-2015) and new (2010-19) **FAO Strategic Frameworks**, as well as to the **UN Millennium Development Goals** and other internationally agreed strategies, goals and standards;

⁷The Ministry of Agriculture is understood here to include forestry, fisheries and livestock, though these in some cases are housed elsewhere.

- b. the degree to which policy work has focused on topics and problems assigned priority by countries, regions and international bodies, and also the role FAO's new Country and Regional Programming processes play in focusing this work;
- c. the degree of (and attention to) complementarity between FAO's policy support and that provided by other sources;
- d. the extent to which work represents the most appropriate response from FAO, takes advantage of FAO's comparative advantages, and takes account of the work of other organizations and institutions;
- e. the flexibility of response in the light of changing demands; and
- f. the relevance of the activities to the intended final beneficiaries.

2. Efficiency (in terms of use of limited resources) of FAO's work in policy, including:

- a. the extent to which the Organization makes use of its multidisciplinary strengths. FAO's internal mechanisms are reviewed under this heading, including integration of policy work with ongoing organizational programmes and initiatives, interaction, harmonisation and collaboration between the many different institutional units dealing with policy work, and the impact of the current reform process on policy work;
- b. partnership and coordination with other international and national organizations providing policy assistance and advice;
- c. the quality of outputs of policy work, including such factors as appropriateness, relevance and implementability;
- d. cost-effectiveness in production of these outputs; and
- e. balance of staff and non-staff resources available for policy work, in particular attempting the difficult measurement of Regular Programme investment in policy assistance, e.g., through FAORep work, RP missions to discuss policy with governments, and other relevant activities, many of which are difficult to track.

3. Effectiveness, impact on the primary and ultimate target beneficiaries, and **sustainability** of outcomes and impacts including, to the extent that they can be judged:

- a. the synergy and balance between FAO's global governance and global public goods role in food and agriculture, and its country-level service role in support of national priorities, requests and needs;
- b. how the resources for and main outputs of policy work are being applied towards achieving the **planned objectives and results** as described in FAO's new Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan;
- c. how assistance has led to increased national skills in policy formulation, including analysis, and resource allocation, such as through strategy development;
- d. how policy assistance and capacity development work has led to strengthened institutional capacity for policy making and implementation in countries; and
- e. indications of the impact of FAO policy assistance on countries' agricultural (including fisheries and forestry) sector, rural development, environmental sustainability, and food security situation.

4. Timeliness: This criterion was added to the standard evaluation criteria since, for policy work, it is often essential to address policy issues at the right time and to provide advice in a timely manner in order to be effective.⁸ Accordingly, the evaluation also addressed the following questions:

- a. How timely has FAO's policy work been in the past? Has FAO's global policy work been able to address emerging issues ahead of time? Was FAO able to respond quickly to unexpected policy-relevant developments?

⁸ Theories of the policy process in political science have developed the concept of the "policy window", which implies that there are often only narrow time slots that present an opportunity for policy change (Kingdon, 1984).

- b. How timely is FAO's policy work at regional and national levels? Has FAO been able to respond to requests for policy assistance in a timely manner? Was FAO able to identify "policy windows", that is windows of opportunity for policy change?

1.4 Structure of the report

23. This report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents the conceptual framework and methodology used for this evaluation. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the role and organization of FAO's policy work. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings from past evaluations. The findings from this evaluation are presented in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 analyses how corporate characteristics influence the performance of FAO's policy work. Chapter 7 summarizes recommendations from this report.

2. Conceptual Frameworks and Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Overall conceptual framework

24. To address the complexities of FAO's Food and Agricultural Policy Work, the evaluation used the conceptual framework displayed in Figure 1 (an evolution of the framework in the Inception Report), which recognizes the breadth of FAO's policy work but focuses on policy processes. In practical terms relative to the list of Strategic Objectives and Impact Focus Areas in FAO's current Medium-Term Plan, this evaluation of FAO's policy work takes into account that FAO is only one actor in often complex policy processes, which poses the typical attribution problem in identifying the impact of FAO's (and others') policy work.
25. Obviously, it is the *impact* of FAO's policy work that is the ultimate criterion for justifying the Organization's work and investment in this area. However, as is further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, FAO has, unlike other organizations, not yet started to document its efforts along the "impact chain" (the steps between policy support and impact in Figure 1), and to assess its contributions to the ultimate impact of the policies that it has been supporting. Absent such evidence, this evaluation focused on the two questions of (1) how FAO delivers its policy work at country, regional and global levels, and (2) how policy work is organized and managed within the Organization (corporate issues). To analyse these two questions, the evaluation Team used two additional conceptual frameworks that "zoom in" on two key areas of the conceptual framework displayed in Figure 1: (a) a "policy daisy" (Figure 2), which "disentangles the policy process" beyond the steps displayed in Figure 1, and (b) a framework that classifies FAO's corporate characteristics and links them to its policy performance (Figure 3).

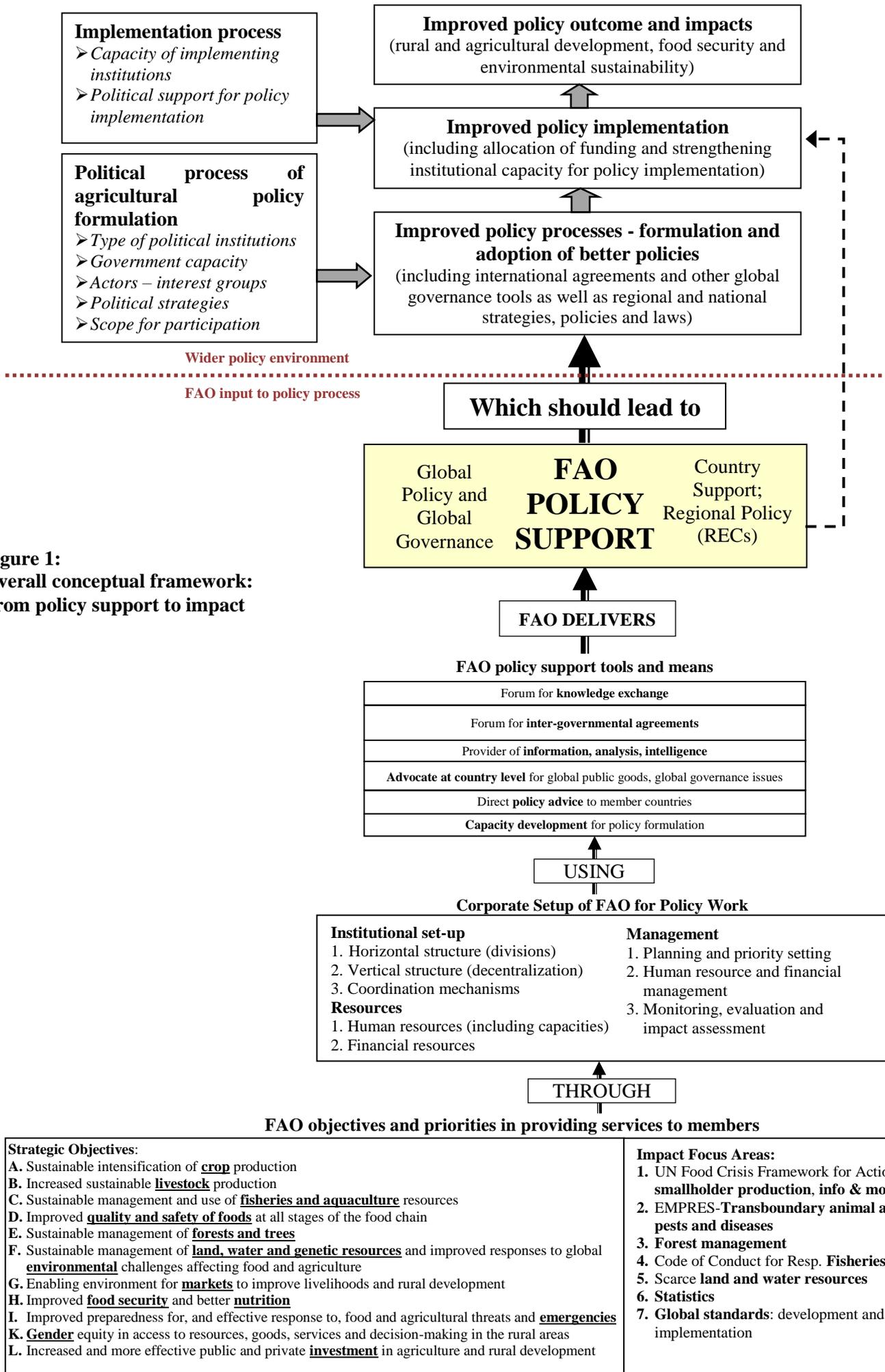
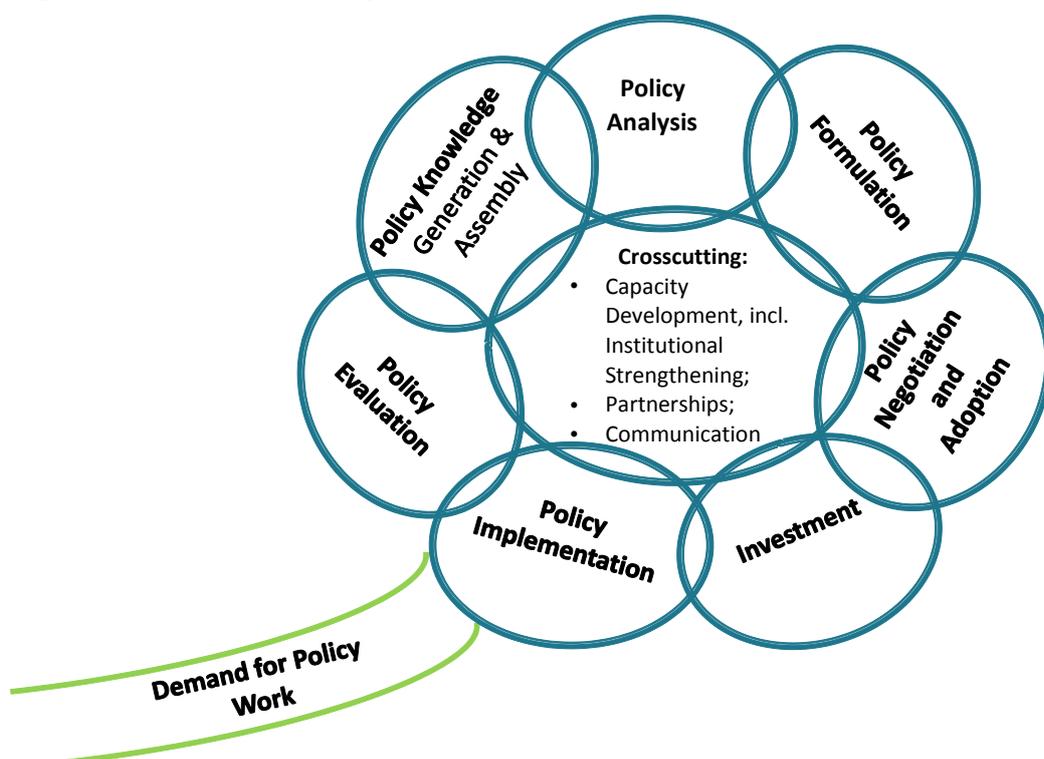


Figure 1:
 Overall conceptual framework:
 From policy support to impact

2.2 The "Policy Daisy": A framework for analyzing policy process

26. Policy support is part of a process and rarely refers to a magic bullet that is delivered in a policy document or law. It is not rare to produce really good policy documents that make no impact at all on a country's or region's actions.⁹ The evaluation task was to see not only where and how FAO is providing support, but also to analyse how this support might be provided more effectively in order to achieve FAO's global goals of hunger and poverty reduction while addressing environmental sustainability.
27. In order to assess how FAO delivers policy assistance, the evaluation found it useful to consider FAO's role in what can be considered as different stages of a "policy cycle." Figure 2, which is referred to as a "policy daisy"¹⁰ displays these stages, which may take place with or without FAO policy support. This "policy daisy" refers to the upper part of the overall framework displayed in Figure 1. The first step in the cycle refers to generation or assembly of policy knowledge. This step may take various forms. At the country level, it may include the analysis of existing policies, the identification of binding constraints to agricultural development and food security, and the assessment of policy options, such as well illustrated recently in non-FAO work by Tsakok (2011).

Figure 2: Phases of the Policy Process: The "Policy Daisy"



Source: Team

28. Policy knowledge can play an important role in informing policy dialogues at national, regional and international levels, and it can help to bring emerging issues on the policy agenda. The next

⁹ A study on agricultural and rural development strategies in West Africa at country and regional levels found that such strategies were often not implemented at all, even though they were developed with substantial participation (Resnick and Birner, 2008).

¹⁰ The Team would like to thank Harry van der Wulp (AGP), who suggested this term when meeting the Team for this evaluation.

step in the policy daisy includes the formulation of policies, which have been defined above to include strategies, laws and regulatory frameworks. This stage also includes the analysis of investment options. The next step in the daisy is the negotiation and adoption of policies by the respective government bodies at national, regional and international levels. Policies need to be implemented to be effective, and many policies require that governments indeed make the investments for their implementation, possibly with the support of donors and international financial institutions. This step is, therefore, also depicted in the policy daisy. Finally, there is a need to evaluate policies and to feed the insights gained from the evaluation into the next round of the policy cycle so that policy learning can take place.

29. The Team fully acknowledges that real-world processes do not necessarily follow such a cycle exactly. This is well acknowledged in the political science literature,¹¹ and also highlighted in FAO's own training material on policy processes.¹² However, the policy daisy turned out to be a useful tool to take a differentiated assessment of the role that FAO can play with regard to various aspects of policy-making, and to identify where it may have comparative advantage as compared to other actors providing policy support.
30. The policy daisy takes into account that FAO's support to various steps of the cycle (petals of the daisy) is inherently linked to cross-cutting concerns: FAO can play an important role in capacity development for policy-making, which includes institutional strengthening.¹³ Moreover, communication and working in partnerships are important aspects of policy work in all steps of the policy cycle. The "stem" of the policy daisy indicates that FAO's policy work does not come "out of the blue"; it has to be firmly grounded in the demand for policy work by FAO's Members and clients. To achieve its mission, FAO may also engage in the creation of demand since the Organization is also responsible for identifying emerging policy issues that are not yet recognized in current policy debates.

2.3 A framework to analyze FAO's corporate capacity to deliver policy assistance

2.3.1 *Overview*

31. To be able to find out how FAO can be most effective in its policy work, the Team used the conceptual framework shown in Figure 3. While the "policy daisy" refers to the upper part of the general framework displayed in Figure 1, the framework depicted in Figure 3 "zooms in" on the lower part of Figure 1 (box labelled "Corporate Setup of FAO for Policy Work"). The main proposition of this framework is that the corporate capacity of FAO to deliver policy work (shown in Boxes C, D and E in Figure 3) and its interaction with Member governments and other actors (Box F) determine the Organization's performance of its policy work (Box G) and its ability to influence policy development and policy implementation at global, regional and country levels (Box H). FAO's impact at the policy level contributes, next to other factors, to the achievement of FAO's overall goals (Box I). The framework also shows that FAO's corporate capacity has to be developed in such a way that it enables the Organization to fulfil its mission and its mandate for policy work (Box A) and that one has to take into account context-specific factors, such as the nature of the policy issues to be addressed and the capacity of client partners into account (Box B).

¹¹ See, for example, the volume edited by Sabatier (2007) on the "Theories of the Policy Process", which presents a variety of conceptual frameworks that acknowledge the complex nature of policy-making processes.

¹² See, for example, the statement in one of FAO's EASYPol resources: "In practice policy processes are complex and messy." (Dubois and Ciamarra, 2009: 7).

¹³ Compare FAO's Corporate Strategy on Capacity Development, which points out that institutional strengthening is part of capacity development, next to strengthening individual skills and building an enabling environment (online at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/Summary_Strategy_PR_E.pdf).

32. In line with FAO's capacity strategy, the framework defines FAO's own corporate capacity for policy work as the ability of the Organization to successfully carry out its functions regarding policy work and achieve desired outcomes over time. As shown in Figure 3, the framework considers three corporate aspects as essential: the institutional set-up of policy work, the human and financial resources deployed for policy work, and the management of policy work.

2.3.2 FAO's institutional set-up for policy work

33. This category refers to the organizational structure of FAO, or, phrased differently, the way in which the "boxes" are arranged in the institution's organogram. The institutional structure covers both FAO's "horizontal" structure, that is the departmental structure of the Organization, and FAO's "vertical" structure, that is the types of decentralized offices and their relations. The way in which the governing bodies of FAO work is also part of its organizational structure. Changes in the institutional structure are typically a long-term process associated with high transaction costs.
34. The evaluation focused on two sets of questions regarding FAO's institutional set-up:
- *1a) Is FAO's horizontal organization of its policy work--that is the location of policy work in different Departments, Divisions and Services suitable for fulfilling FAO's mandate? Would a reorganization of FAO's policy work in this regard result in higher performance, and if so, what options for reorganization seem promising?* A major trade-off to be considered here is the one between (1) creating specialized policy units in different branches of the Organization, and (2) integrating policy work as far as possible in one department. The first option has the potential to optimize the policy-technology interface, while the second option has the potential to optimize coordination and synergies. Interdivisional or interdepartmental coordination mechanisms, such as interdepartmental working groups (IdWG), can also promote coordination, but such mechanisms are not necessarily sustainable and consume scarce staff time.
 - *1b) Is FAO's vertical organization of its policy work--that is the degree and type of decentralization, suitable for fulfilling FAO's mandate? Would a reorganization of FAO's decentralized structure result in higher performance, and if so, what options for vertical reorganization seem promising?* Decentralization can increase FAO's ability to respond to regional and country-specific policy needs and to shorten decision procedures. The trade-off is that a more centralized system has better prospects to make effective use of the knowledge at Headquarters and to exercise quality control.

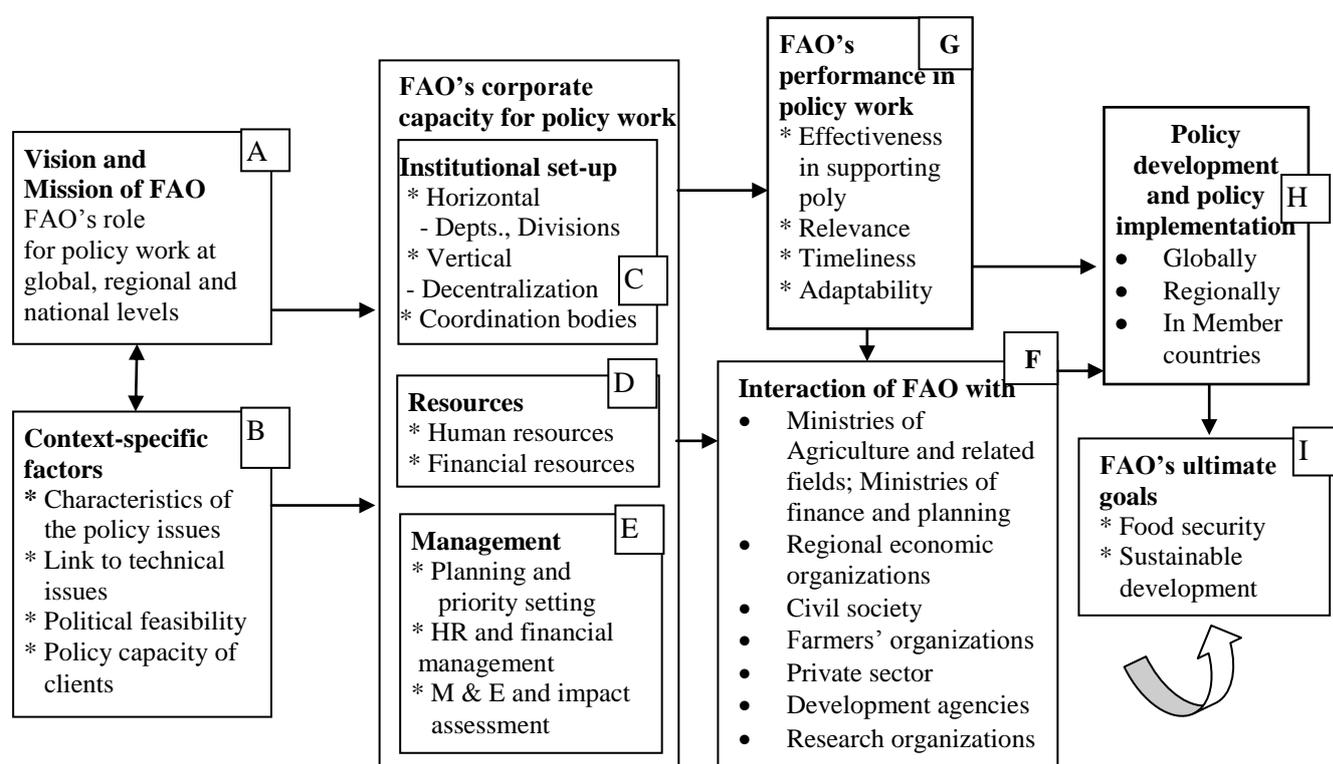
2.3.3 FAO's human and financial resources for policy work

35. This category refers to the human and financial resources that are available for policy work within FAO and the way in which they are distributed in the institutional set-up (Box D). The human resource capacity refers to the numbers of staff involved in policy work as well as their skill and experience level. The policy skills base of technical FAO staff also forms part of FAO's human resource capacity in the field of policy.
36. The evaluation concentrated on the following sets of questions regarding FAO's capacity for policy work:
- *2a) Is FAO's human resource capacity for policy work adequate, considering FAO's mandate and comparative advantage for policy work? Do FAO's policy staffs have adequate incentives for fulfilling the Organization's mandate?*
 - *2b) Is the availability of financial resources for FAO's policy work adequate, considering FAO's mandate and its comparative advantage for policy work? Is there room for using FAO's financial resources for policy work more effectively?*

2.3.4 FAO's management of policy work

37. This category refers to the ways in which FAO plans, executes, monitors and evaluates its activities in the field of policy, and to the way in which the Organization manages its financial and human resources (Box E).
38. Important questions addressed by the evaluation in this area include the following:
- 3a) What procedures does FAO use for setting priorities for its policy work? What mechanisms does FAO use to channel policy demand into the Organization?
 - 3b) How do internal FAO procedures affect the Organization's capacity to respond to demand for policy work at the country, regional and international level? How does FAO compare with other organizations in this respect?
 - 3c) What procedures does FAO have to ensure the relevance and quality of its policy work?

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework for Analysing FAO's Corporate Capacity for Policy Work



Source: Team (adapted from Birner and Wittmer, 2009)

2.4 Evaluation Approach and Methods

39. The evaluation carried out its investigation through the following means:

- An extensive **review of relevant documentation** from within FAO, including FAO's strategic planning documents and data on projects and human financial resources, as well information as from other agencies working in policy support in FAO's areas of mandate;
- **Interviews with a range of staff members** in FAO, including management and staff of the policy units of the Economic and Social Development Department (ESA, EST and ESW), the policy units of the Technical Cooperation Department TCSP and TCSF as well as TCI, the policy units of the technical departments and divisions, and other technical divisions;

- **Interviews with Member country Permanent Representatives**, since they have an important role in the strategic planning discussions in Rome;
- **Questionnaires to FAO Representatives and Assistant Representatives (Programme)** to receive information on the policy activities they undertake and consider important, on the way in which policy work is undertaken, on the support they receive from different parts of the Organization for their policy work, and on the outcome of their policy work (such as policies or strategies adopted and laws passed);
- **Questionnaires to senior officials ministries of agriculture and related sectors** as users of FAO policy products and services to gather their views on usefulness, relevance, quality and comparative advantages of FAO policy work;¹⁴
- **Special studies** on FAO support to the CAADP process and a sub-sector study on fisheries were conducted (Annexes 4 and 5);
- **Visits to 16 case-study countries** (several countries in each region, identified through a stratified random selection process that is further described in Annex 2)¹⁵ for information gathering and analysis of policy support needs, and provision of support by FAO and others. The case-study country visits constituted a major component of this evaluation since they provided essential insights on how policy support is actually delivered at the country level. Accordingly, the country studies examined FAO's role in ensuring adequate support to agriculture within the countries' overall policies as well as the formulation and implementation of agriculture-specific strategies, policies and reform initiatives. The country missions discussed with government officials from technical to senior political levels, FAO country staff, national stakeholders in the policy process (NGOs, INGOs and civil society organizations, such as farmers' organizations, private sector organizations, and academic institutions). Representatives of other UN organizations as well as development agencies and donors present in the country were interviewed, as well. The visits were arranged by the FAO Offices in the case-study countries, based on requests by the Team members regarding the type of organizations or regarding concrete organizations to be visited. The goal was to meet at least with one representative of each type of organizations in the above list, even though this was not always possible due to time constraints. For almost all countries, the Team members could draw on their prior experience of the policy situation in the case-study countries, as well.
- **Visits to all five FAO Regional offices and 10 of the 13 Sub-regional Offices.**¹⁶ In these offices, the Team interviewed (when available) managers of the offices (Regional Representatives and Sub-regional Coordinators), all staff working as policy officers, as well as a nearly all technical officers.
- **Visits and interviews with key agencies (UN and other) and institutions working in policy.** This included the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, WTO, WIPO, UNCTAD, the UN Economic Commission for Europe – UNECE, WHO, and the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee for Humanitarian Assistance.

¹⁴ The questionnaires to FAO-Reps and Assistant FAO-Rs and to ministry officials are available from FAO's OED Office.

¹⁵ The case-study countries were: Syria, Colombia, , Ecuador, Honduras, Lesotho, DRC, Rwanda, Liberia, Benin, Ethiopia, North Sudan, South Sudan, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India and Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁶ Regional Offices: Europe and Central Asia (REU – Budapest), Latin America and the Caribbean (RLA – Santiago), Asia and the Pacific (RAP – Bangkok), Near East and North Africa (RNE – Cairo), Africa (RAF – Accra). Sub-regional Offices: Europe (SEU – Budapest), Central Asia (SEC – Ankara), South America (SLS – Santiago), Central America (SLC – Panama), Pacific (SAP – Samoa), Middle East (SNE – Cairo), North Africa (SNO – Tunis), West Africa (SFW – Accra), East Africa (SFE – Addis Ababa), and Southern Africa (SFS – Harare).

- **Visits to key policy research institutions:** IFPRI, ODI and the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD).
 - **Meetings and discussions with officials in OECD countries,** including both donor agencies (DFID, EU, Swiss Development Agency, Belgian Development Agency, USAID, AusAID) and government authorities (US Department of Agriculture, US Government Accountability Office, UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – DEFRA, Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture).
40. An **Independent Expert Panel** composed of senior authorities in the field of policy, was brought together in Rome in March 2011 to review the Inception Report and provide input on the design of the evaluation. A **workshop** was held in Rome at mid-point in the evaluation following data gathering in the field, to discuss preliminary ideas emerging from that phase of work.
41. A second meeting of the Expert Panel was held at the end of the evaluation to discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the Team. The Team also had a joint meeting with the Expert Panel and the Director General Elect as well as a joint meeting with the Expert Panel and the ADG of the Technical Cooperation Department. Following that, another workshop with FAO staff was held to discuss comments on the report. To further discuss the changes recommended by the Expert Panel, the Team held additional meetings with Senior Management of the Economic and Social Development Department and the Technical Cooperation Department. Taking the insights of all these meetings into account, the report was finalised and delivered to senior management for preparation of FAO's Management Response to the evaluation.

3. FAO Policy Work: Role, Organization and Management

42. This chapter first discusses the role that FAO should play in policy work according to its mandate and objectives and then presents how policy work in FAO is currently organized and managed to fulfil this role.

3.1 FAO's Role in policy

43. In order to assess FAO's policy work, there is a need for a reference situation against which FAO's policy activities can be evaluated. Hence, this evaluation needs to address the question: What role *should* FAO play in policy processes at the global, regional and country levels?
44. Obviously, FAO's policy work needs to contribute to the Organization's three overarching global goals of reducing hunger, addressing poverty and promoting environmental sustainability:¹⁷
- **Goal 1:** Access of all people at all times to sufficient nutritionally adequate and safe food, ensuring that the number of undernourished people is reduced by half (relative to 1990) by no later than 2015.
 - **Goal 2:** The continued contribution of sustainable agriculture and rural development, including fisheries and forestry, to economic and social progress and the well-being of all.
 - **Goal 3:** The conservation, improvement and sustainable utilization of natural resources, including land, water, forest, fisheries and genetic resources for food and agriculture.
45. Based on the organizational and public policy literature, one could derive criteria and principles that could inform FAO's delineation of the role it should play in policy to promote the achievement of these goals. At the global and regional levels, such criteria would include the need to provide global and regional public goods on which agriculture and food security depend, the need address externalities that rise at cross-country level, and the need to facilitate cooperation between countries so as to realize benefits from collective action, such as agreements on joint standards.¹⁸ Principles such as comparative advantage and subsidiarity could be used to assess whether FAO or other organizations should play the respective policy roles.
46. At the country level, it is even more demanding to define FAO's policy role as a global organization, taking into account the responsibility that national governments themselves have to ensure food security and agricultural development, the need intervene based on humanitarian grounds, and the wide variety of other organizations that can provide policy services at country-level. Ultimately, the decision as to what FAO's policy role *should* be cannot be decided on the basis of theoretical principles, as it involves value judgments. Therefore, this evaluation considered as reference situation FAO's *own* programmatic statements on the policy role that the Organization envisages to play at global, regional and country levels. These statements, which are approved by FAO's governing bodies (see Section 3.2.1), reflect the preferences of the Members as to what FAO, as "their Organization," should do for them in the field of policy as well as an assessment of what the Organization can deliver, considering the budgetary and extra-budgetary resources available to finance FAO's policy work.
47. In this respect, the evaluation considered FAO's description of Core Function D (Policy) in its current Medium-Term Plan 2010-2013 as the main point of reference. This Core Function has been quoted in Box 1 in the introduction. One can note that the formulation of this core function

¹⁷ The Strategic Framework for FAO 2000-2015 <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x3551e/x3551e02.htm>

¹⁸ Compare the section entitled "Progress on the Global Agenda" in the 2008 World Development Report on "Agriculture for Development" (World Bank, 2007, p. 258ff).

is rather encompassing, covering all “petals of the “policy daisy” outlined above. It does not provide a sense of prioritization of FAO’s policy work, neither does it provide an indication of the areas for which FAO, as a global organization, may have a comparative advantage when considering the policy role it could play at global, regional and national levels.

48. The following quote provides additional information on *how* FAO envisages fulfilling its Core Function D. The bolding has been inserted to highlight claims that are considered as reference points in this evaluation.

“The core function on policy and strategy options and advice **takes account of growing demand for policy assistance by member countries and Regional Economic Integration Organizations (REIOs)**. It is particularly relevant to Strategic Objectives F [sustainable natural resource management], H [improved food security and better nutrition], I, [preparedness for and response to threats and emergencies], K [gender equity] and L increased investment], but due attention is given to other SOs [Strategic Objectives] with less prominent interfaces with policy. Its application **covers many facets**, i.e., beyond direct policy advice per se, capacity development for policy formulation and implementation, institutional strengthening, country information, policy monitoring, and identification of Members’ priorities for field programme development. The core function **builds on successful strategy options which have been identified, based on available evidence and FAO’s range of assessment** of trends in food security, agriculture, fisheries and forestry. **Coherent approaches are ensured via an emerging policy network**, which will be further consolidated, facilitating interdisciplinary inputs from all relevant FAO units at headquarters and in the decentralized offices. **More ad hoc arrangements may be used**. For example, in the face of recurrent high food prices, an interdepartmental group has contributed to a widely-used guide for policy and programmatic actions at country level to address high food prices.” (FAO, 2011: 16-17)

49. FAO uses a results-based management approach. Therefore, one needs to consider results as a further reference point for FAO’s own vision of the role that it envisages to play in policy. The current Medium-Term Plan (2010-2013) defines altogether 56 Organizational Results and 174 Measurable Indicators linked to these results. The Organizational Results are not linked to the core functions, but to FAO’s eleven Strategic Objectives (listed in Figure 1, see box at the bottom of the figure) and its two Functional Objectives (“effective collaboration with Member States and stakeholders” and “efficient and effective administration”). As pointed out in the introduction, almost all Organizational Results include the adoption of strategies, policies, regulatory frameworks, laws, plans or programs with regard to the respective objectives, ranging from sustainable intensification of crop production to increased public and private investment in agriculture and rural development.

50. As will be further discussed below, the way in which FAO currently defines its role in policy seems problematic in two respects. On the one hand, FAO’s definition of its policy work in its main programmatic document, the Medium-Term Plan, is rather broad. It does not seem to be based on an analysis of the comparative advantage of FAO at different levels, nor does it seem to acknowledge a need for priority setting and to identify criteria for that purpose. On the other hand, the Organizational Results that FAO has formulated with regard to its policy work focus almost exclusively on the adoption of a certain policy instrument (strategy, policy, law, regulatory framework), but they do not include an orientation towards the *impact* to be achieved through these instruments. In view of the fact that many countries have policies, strategies and laws (often adopted under donor pressure) that are only partly or never implemented,¹⁹ there is a need to identify the role that FAO could most usefully play in improving the impact of its policy work.

¹⁹ This fact is widely acknowledged in the literature. See, for example, van de Walle (2001), Jayne et al. (2002) and Resnick and Birner (2008).

51. Against this background, it would seem helpful if the Core Function D was to be elaborated and measures were taken to establish an impact orientation with regard to FAO's policy work. This is reflected in **Recommendation 1** in **Chapter 5**, regarding the need for FAO to clearly prioritize and target its policy role and activities, and in **Recommendation 3** regarding impact culture. In identifying criteria for priority setting of policy work, FAO's comparative advantage for harvesting, adapting and communicating global knowledge, its ability to serve as a trusted partner and neutral facilitator, and its mandate to focus on the most food-insecure people can serve as principles, as will be further discussed below.
52. In defining FAO's role in policy, there is not only a need to define FAO's role vis-à-vis national governments and intergovernmental organizations, but also a need to define its role vis-à-vis the private sector and civil society organizations including farmers' associations. Depending on their political orientation, national governments and agricultural authorities have rather different perspectives on public, private and third sector roles²⁰ in agricultural development, which was also noted by the country visits held for this evaluation. The various interviews with FAO Staff revealed that there is not a common view on the differentiation of public, private and third sector roles and FAO's position in this regard.
53. To further explore FAO policy perspectives on private and third-sector roles, the evaluation consulted recent key institutional documents, first the Strategic Framework 2010-2019. Strategic Objective L 'Increased and more effective public and private investment in agriculture and rural development' acknowledges the role of the public and the private sector, as does Organizational Results: L2 "Improved public and private sector organizations' capacity to plan, implement and enhance the sustainability of food and agriculture and rural development investment operations"; and L3 "Quality assured public/private sector investment programmes, in line with national priorities and requirements, developed and financed". In short, at a strategic level, the private sector is indeed recognised as important by FAO.
54. The Program of Work and Budget 2012-13 also acknowledges the third sector, by pointing to the "opportunity" of a "broadening base of governance to give full recognition to the roles and interests of the private sector, NGOs, regional economic organizations, regional development banks and other agencies." The private and third sectors are also acknowledged in the Core Functions, under Partnerships: "A more specific FAO Strategy on Collaboration within the UN system is expected to be finalized during 2011. There are also more detailed strategies to deal **with non-state actors, i.e., civil society and the private sector**"; ... and "It is also intended to issue renewed principles and guidelines for partnering with the private sector, pilot new partnerships with selected business actors in various areas of FAO's mandate, and implement due diligence process and risk management tools."
55. There are thus positive moves towards greater attention to the private and third sector in the works. These are further taken up in the Program of Work and Budget Overview: "Due emphasis is placed on cooperation with the private sector, especially as key partners in the food value chain, as well as providers of support services" and again "Private sector engagement in agriculture investment is to be strengthened through capacity development for Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and support for country implementation of the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment." The private sector and the third sector are also mentioned at various points in the detailed Medium-Term Plan and Programme of Work and Budget of FAO, e.g., food safety, livestock, fisheries, forests, marketing. For example, Indicator 2 for Organizational Result G3 refers to the "Number of Ministries of Agriculture with institutional mechanisms for agribusiness, agro-industries or engaging the private sector in agricultural development." (FAO, 2011: 141) Likewise, Organizational Result G01 calls for a higher emphasis to "Analysis to

²⁰ The term "third sector" is used to refer to civil society organizations as well as farmers' associations (compare World Bank, 2007: 248).

inform the formulation of policies and strengthening of institutions (cooperatives, farmers' groups and value chain associations) to support small-scale agriculture and facilitate smallholder integration in markets" and also for a higher emphasis to "producer organizations, as a prime target group for assistance among wider rural institutions." (FAO, 2011: 45).

56. While these statements reflect an increasing recognition of FAO for private and third sector roles, the evaluation still sees a need to integrate these roles more explicitly in the *analysis of potential policy options*. This is reflected in **Recommendation 6** in Chapter 5, which calls for strengthening the capability of technical units to **provide countries with alternative policy options** that are assessed from economic, social and environmental perspectives rather than pushing "one-size-fits-all" solutions. These alternative options may also differ in the roles they assign to the public, private and third sectors.

3.2 FAO's Corporate Capacity for Policy Work

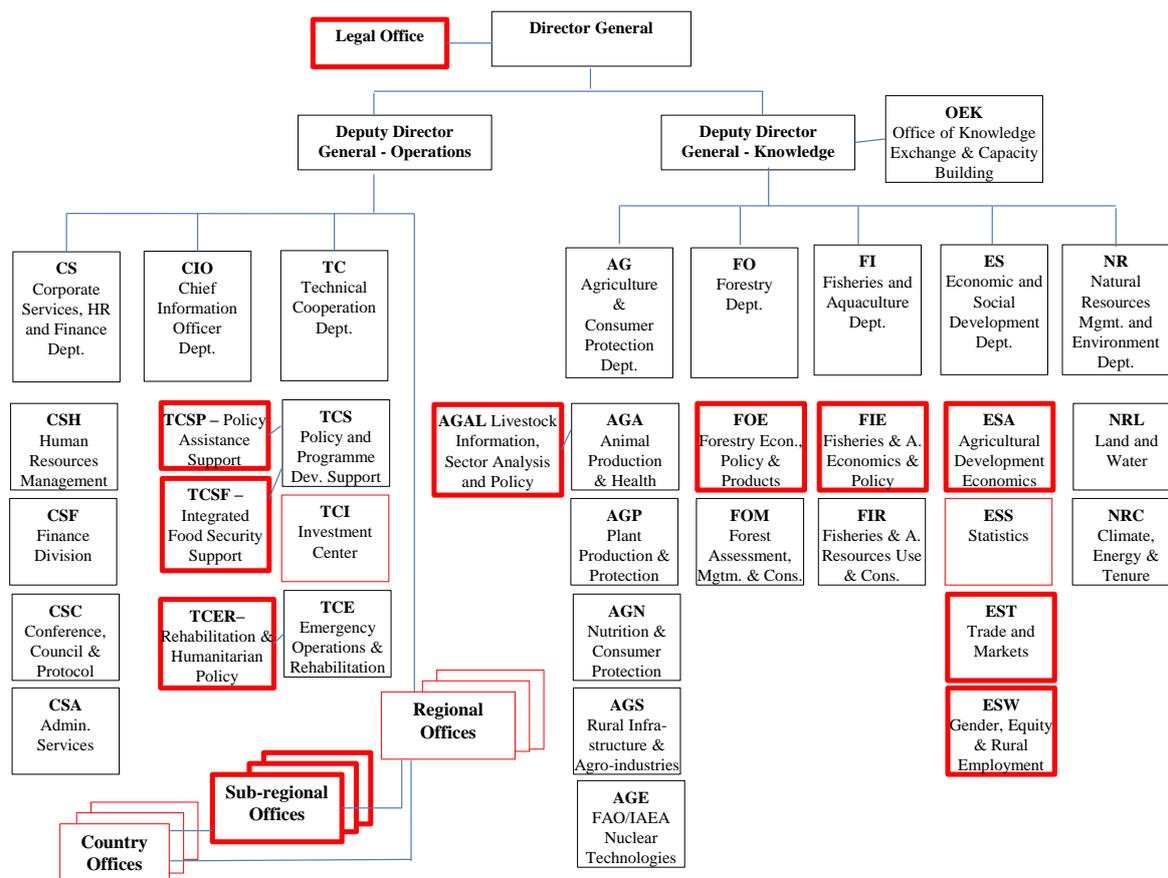
57. This section uses the conceptual framework shown in Figure 3 to present how FAO's policy work is organized and managed and what human and financial resources FAO has for its policy work.

3.2.1 Institutional set-up

Headquarters level

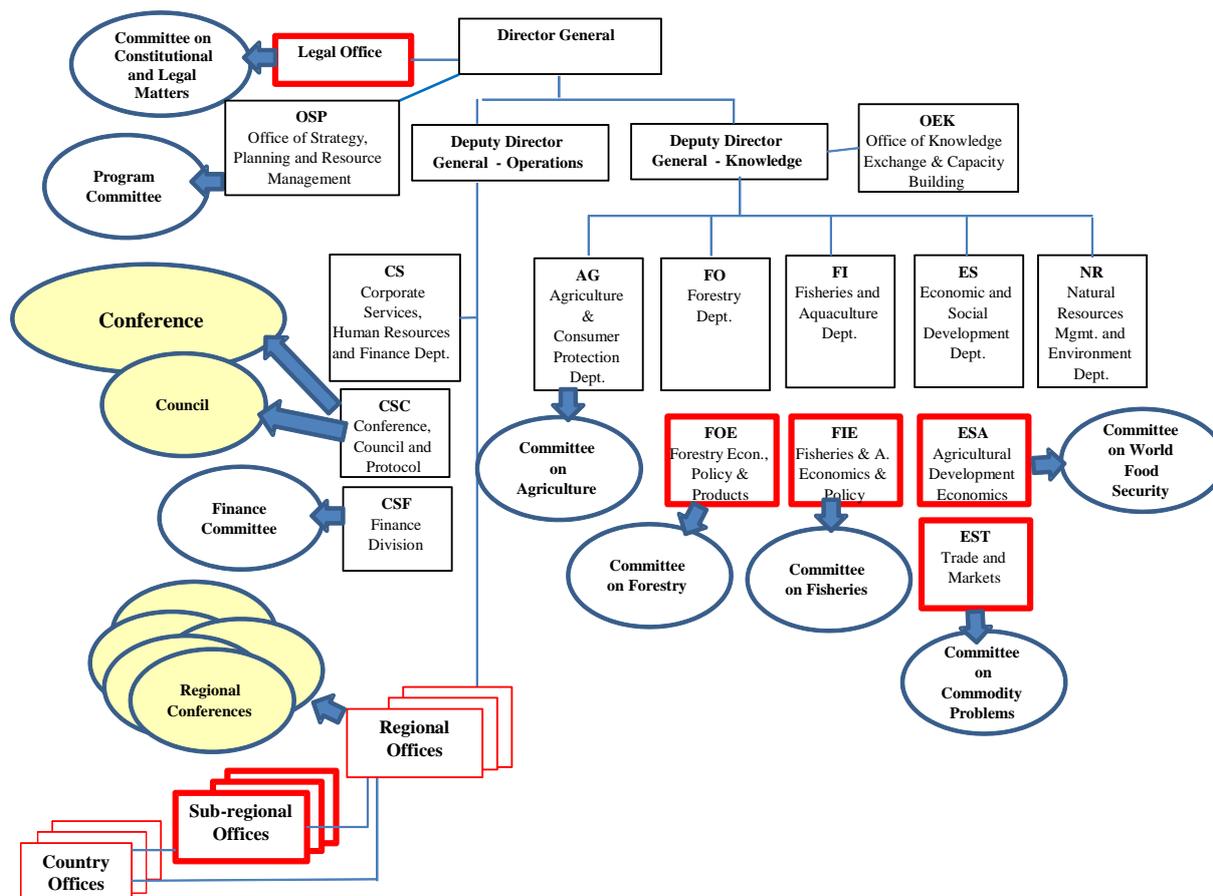
58. Figure 4 displays an organogram of FAO's Headquarter Departments and Divisions as of July 2011. The figure also shows how FAO's decentralized offices are linked to the Headquarter structure. Figure 5 uses this organogram as a basis to display the governing bodies of FAO and shows how they are linked to organizational units at headquarters and to the Regional Offices.

Figure 4: Institutional set-up of FAO's policy work



Note: Red boxes indicate Divisions or units within Divisions that concentrate on policy, economic and legal analysis. As explained in the text, policy work—as defined for this evaluation—is carried out in all Divisions
 Source: Based on FAO Organigram

Figure 5: FAO's governing bodies and their links to FAO's organizational structure



Note: The Regional Conferences are also linked to the Office of Support to Decentralization (OSD) at Headquarters.

Source: Based on FAO Organigram

59. Identifying in which Divisions policy work is carried out is not a straightforward task, since this evaluation uses a broad definition of policy (see Chapter 1 above). According to this definition, policy work is carried out in all five departments under the Deputy Director General Knowledge and in the Technical Cooperation Department and the Decentralized Offices, which fall under the Deputy Director General Operations. The Legal Office, which is located under the Director General's Office, also contributes to policy development.

60. For ease of analysis, it was decided to limit some of the assessment work of this report to what were defined as "the units mostly focusing on policy work" (in short "policy-focused divisions"). Figure 4 highlights those Divisions that can be classified as mostly focusing on policy work. They include:

- in the Economic and Social Development Department (ES)²¹
 - the Agricultural Development Economics Division – ESA
 - the Trade and Markets Division – EST
 - the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division –ESW
- in the Technical Cooperation Department (TC), as part of the Policy and Programme Development Support Division (TCS)

²¹ The Statistics Division (ESS) in the ES Department provides important input for policy work. Since ESS was evaluated recently, it is not included in this evaluation.

- the Policy Assistance Support Service – TCSP
 - the Integrated Food Security Support Service – TCSF
 - in the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department (AG)
 - the Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch - AGAL
 - the Forestry Department (FO)
 - the Forestry Economics, Policy and Products Division - FOE
 - in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FI)
 - the Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Economics Division – FIP, and
 - in the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Department,
 - the Rehabilitation and Humanitarian Policy Service (TCER),
61. The Investment Centre Division (TCI) also conducts policy work, in relation to its support to investment activities.²² However, the organizational structure of this division is designed according to regions, not by thematic areas; hence there is no specific policy unit in this Department.
62. The Legal Office, which is organizationally located under the Director General's Office, also supports policy work at global, regional and national levels as far as legal instruments are concerned.
63. The analysis of human and financial resources (see below) was conducted only for the policy-focused organizational units in FAO. To limit the scope of the evaluation, the Legal Office and the Rehabilitation and Humanitarian Policy Service (TCER) were not included in the analysis of human and financial resources. Moreover, the evaluation clearly recognises that focusing on specific units is a rather inadequate measure of the policy support work done by FAO, which as noted runs through much of the technical assistance work of all of the other divisions and units of the Organization, including regional, sub-regional and country offices. The interviews at Headquarters and the review of HQ activities confirm that substantial policy work is carried out outside the organizational units that can be classified as policy-focused. For example, the head of the Animal Health Service in the Animal Production and Health Division estimates that approximately 40% of the work conducted in this Service can be characterized as policy work. In fact, all Divisions are involved in the development of sub-sector specific strategies and policies, which falls under the definition of policy used for this review.
64. However, there are currently no means for separating the policy-related work from the rest in those offices. Even in discussions with the technical officers and managers themselves, their own estimates of this kind of work varied wildly depending on how they viewed the word policy. Therefore, this evaluation was not able to quantify the resources used for policy work conducted outside what has been classified here as “policy-focused units.” It is hoped that as a result of the recommendations of this Evaluation, incentives will be in place for more careful attention to be paid to distinguishing the policy support elements of all parts of FAO's work.

Decentralized level

65. FAO's decentralized structure consists of five Regional Offices, 11 Sub-Regional Offices. 4 are located in Africa, 2 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2 in the Near East and 2 in Europe. In the Asia and Pacific region, there is only a Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific Islands. In addition, FAO has two Multi-Disciplinary Teams, one for the Oriental Near East and one for South America, both of which are co-located with Regional Offices.

²² According to information from TCI management, TCI has partnership agreements with 27 International Financial Institutions. Support to investment preparation forms approximately 50% of its total workload, while 30% of its work is targeted on upstream strategy and policy work and 20% on capacity development for investment planning/preparation.

66. The vision for the country offices has been described by FAO as follows:²³ “FAO, functioning as one, with Decentralized Offices an integral part of the Organization, is a world-wide provider of high quality policy advice, information, support for capacity development and technical services on food and agriculture.” This is to be achieved through a “Strong and responsive country-office-centred network that provides timely and effective services by drawing on the full range of technical expertise in FAO, its Members and Partners.” The tasks of and relation between the different types of decentralized offices and the Headquarters have been outlined in a recent “FAO Circular on Responsibilities and Relationships” (15 April 2011), hereafter referred to as the Circular.
67. Naturally, the country offices provide the most important interface for FAO's policy work at country level, and the FAO Representative (FAORep) plays the key role in this respect. FAOReps are expected to “lead FAO's engagement in long-term, nationally led processes that aim at enhancing cooperation in technical and policy areas.” FAO's corporate policy also assigns the responsibility for negotiation with country governments and donors on all policy issues, including humanitarian policy issues, to the FAORep. The Sub-regional Technical Officers are expected to serve as “first port-of-call for technical, policy and other capacity development support for FAOReps.” When necessary expertise is not available in the Sub-regional Office, the FAOReps are expected to seek support, with the assistance of the Sub-regional Office, from the Regional Office or headquarters. The role of the Headquarters is defined as follows: “Headquarters units, building on inputs from Decentralized Offices, will take the lead on: servicing the collective needs of FAO's Members; consensus building on global issues; contributing to global policy and regulatory frameworks; and coordinating the sharing and disseminating of information and knowledge between locations”.

Coordination mechanisms

68. The above description indicates that the responsibility for policy work is spread throughout the Organization, both vertically and horizontally. This leads to the important question of the institutional mechanisms for the coordination of policy work. Box 2 uses the example of FAO's work on climate change to illustrate the opportunities and challenges of interdisciplinary collaboration within the Organization.
69. *Lines of reporting:* The way in which reporting lines are organized has important implications for information flows and possibilities for coordination. In this regard, it is important to note that following the recent (2008) reform of decentralisation, the policy officers in the decentralized offices no longer have a direct reporting line to any of the Technical Departments at Headquarters that have policy units. The staffs in the decentralized offices, including the policy officers, report to heads of the Regional Offices (i.e., the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative - ADG/RR) through (in the case of sub-regional and country offices) the heads of their respective decentralized office. The heads of the country offices (FAOReps) and the sub-regional offices (SRO Coordinators) both report to the ADG/RR, who in turn reports to the Deputy Director General for Operations (DDG-O). The policy staff in the Headquarters Divisions report to the heads of their respective units, who report to the heads of the respective Departments, also ADGs. Other than the one for the TC Department, these ADGs report to the Deputy Director-General for Knowledge (DDG-K) (see the organizational chart in Figure 3 above). Before the 2008 reforms, the work plans of technical officers in the decentralised offices were part of the work plan of their “home divisions” in HQ. Since the reform, however, they are part of the Regional Office work planning and are no longer subject to approval by HQ.

²³ Report of the May 2011 Joint Meeting of the FAO Programme and Finance Committees JM 2011 2.3.

70. *Informal arrangements:* Informal arrangements, such as the creation of “communities of practice” can play an important role in improving coordination across organizational units. The evaluation indicates that there are differences in the extent to which Headquarters staff working on policy are able to link with the respective staff in the decentralized offices through informal means, such as the use of communication tools and annual meetings. The Plant Production and Protection Division (AGPM) has an informal but highly active network with all relevant decentralised officers, as does the Fisheries Department. There are also informal working groups working on emerging issues. For example, there is a working group on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) with members from AGN, AGS, AGP and EST, which was helpful in informing policy work at the country level, for example, in Thailand. According to interviews, the fact that staffs, except in TCI, do not have to keep time sheets to assign all of their activities to specific funding sources makes it easier to collaborate on an informal basis with other units in the Organization.²⁴
71. *Formal arrangements:* The main formal mechanism for collaboration across units that could be identified in this evaluation is Inter-Departmental Working Groups (IDWGs). Their relevance and also their duration seem to differ widely. One example is the IDWG on Biotechnology, which – according to interviews – played a useful role in building FAO's expertise in this field and, among other things, bringing it to bear on the 2004 SOFA report on biotechnology. The 2011 Circular on Responsibilities and Relationships indicates that formalized “Functional Technical Networks” (FTN) should become a major coordination mechanism in the future. They are foreseen to create links both horizontally across different HQ units and vertically by including staff from decentralized offices. The Circular acknowledges, however, that not all informal networks need to be formalized to become FTNs.

Box 2: Interdisciplinary collaboration in FAO: The Case of Climate Change

FAO has recognised the importance of a systems or interdisciplinary approach to policy work. However, given the structure of the Organization and the reporting system, it is difficult to achieve the necessary integration to facilitate this in practice. There are diverse attempts to encourage joint programmes and closer working relationships through the multi-disciplinary teams at regional offices, through externally funded-projects that require collaboration, the Multi-Disciplinary Fund (MDF) available for small interdisciplinary programmes in house and through a range of working groups. These, however, rely primarily on the interest, enthusiasm and available time of key individuals. Unless their time in these groups is reflected in the results-based management reporting system, these teams and working groups may struggle to maintain momentum, especially when key staff members move on.

One attempt that appears to be ensuring a truly interdisciplinary approach is the FAO-Adapt Framework and the “Climate-Smart” Agriculture initiative within FAO that is geared towards adaptation and mitigation strategies to ensure food security. This work involves a range of activities including lifecycle analysis of major products, informing governments on the agricultural contributions in emissions, and also on the effects of different mitigation and adaptation strategies. Climate-Smart agriculture is designed to transform the way food is produced; capacity development initiatives are planned to incorporate mitigation as well as adaptation. This collaboration is producing some useful more-integrated, knowledge products, which highlight the kinds of policies and investments needed. What is less clear yet is evidence of this work being taken up in the field. It is perhaps too early for this to be seen, but it is obvious that there is both a strong demand and a real need for more engagement at country level on these issues. A forthcoming e-learning course for staff may help to get the FAO country offices familiar with information and materials to share with national counterparts but the time and capacity of these offices may mean they are unable to take up the opportunities. Moreover, FAO's Mitigation of Climate Change in Agriculture (MICCA) Programme, which is supported by Finland, Germany and Norway, provides an important avenue to achieve impact on the ground. The program aims for the production of global statistics on agricultural emissions, and assessment of emissions and mitigation potentials from agriculture, which will inform the next report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC). Another output is

²⁴ The keeping of time sheets is a common management instrument in many organizations that have different sources of funding. In IFPRI, for example, all staff members are required to keep time sheets and to assign their activities either to core funding or to specific projects.

an internet portal to provide data, policy advice and tools for agricultural mitigation. The programme also participates in the development of investment guidelines for incorporating climate change considerations into the agricultural investments.

Importantly, FAO's initiative on Climate-Smart Agriculture is bringing together experts from across the House in HQ into working teams and has the capacity to also closely engage with the field staff. The initiative is bringing together much of the available international work in the wide range of relevant disciplines and filling some gaps with some original research. The outputs of the joint work can then be used to inform country-level activities as well as global processes, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

There are, however, difficulties (even with such a well-funded programme) to ensure that there are consistent teamwork and outputs. For the most part the work is only loosely coordinated and most remains dominated by divisional outputs with limited cross-disciplinary outputs. This also poses a challenge for the integration of cross-cutting concerns, such as gender, social equity and employment. It is currently difficult to establish a workable reporting framework that would ensure more cohesive team approaches. There are also a number of administrative factors that make it difficult to work across Departments e.g., it requires ADG approval for anyone over a P4 to travel, which has caused constraints for some, though not all participating Departments. This can be cumbersome if one is being asked by a different Department to travel when working on an interdisciplinary team, and in some ROs proves difficult even when funding is made available from HQ. Reflections on the needs for better interdisciplinarity in policy work lead in Chapter 7 to suggestions for change in management processes in the Organization.

72. *Project arrangements and specific events:* The evaluation suggests that joint work on specific projects is one of the most important avenues by which members of HQ divisions collaborate with staff in decentralized offices. For example, the head of the policy unit in the Animal Production and Health Division estimates that approximately one-third of the time of the staff working on policy is spent on project work with decentralized offices. FAO staffs in HQ are expected to "earn" a certain amount of their annual budget – indicated in the Programme of Work and Budget as expected "income" – through provision of services to field projects. Unlike in other organizations such as the World Bank, this is, however, not mandatory for staff. Specific events may also create opportunities for coordination. For example, the High Level Policy Learning Programme coordinated by TCSP involved 16 divisions of FAO and made it possible to share policy work with senior policy makers as well as FAO-Reps from selected countries.

73. *Human resource management policies:* Policies such as requiring staff to rotate between different units at HQ and decentralized level can also support knowledge exchange and coordination across the Organization. Policy officers who have worked in different units of the Organization may be in a better position to "draw on the full range of expertise" of the Organization, as envisioned (see above), because of both the knowledge and the personal relations they can build in the process. Following the recommendation of the IEE, FAO is currently putting in place a "Policy on Organizational Staff Mobility" which in its current draft indicates that mobility will be mandatory for professional staff, and should have a positive impact on this type of knowledge exchange and coordination. However, at the moment FAO does not require the FAOREps at the country level to have worked in the Organization before. According to the FAORep survey, 70 percent of FAOREps who responded have no experience of working in HQ. This may gradually improve as there is reportedly a strategy to increase the number of FAO staff who are appointed to fill FAORep posts.

FAO's Governing Bodies

74. Figure 5 above displays the Governing Bodies of FAO, which are an essential element in FAO's institutional set-up. They are of overarching importance for FAO's policy work, because, as indicated in Section 3.1 above, they ultimately define the role that FAO should play at global, regional and national levels as well as in specific sub-sectors of agriculture. They can

also play an important role in holding the organization accountable for its results in policy work. The IEE (2007) was rather critical of the functioning of FAO's governing bodies with regard to the Organization's internal governance,²⁵ but major reform activities have been undertaken and completed under the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA, see Full Management Report on IPA Implementation in 2010-11).

75. FAO's governing bodies comprise the Conference and the Council as overall governing bodies, three committees that concentrate on FAO's management (Program Committee, Finance Committee and Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters), five committees that deal with specific subject matter areas, and the Regional Conferences. As can be seen from the organogram, the Committees on Forestry and Fisheries are linked to the respective policy units in the Forestry Department and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. Two committees are linked to policy-focused divisions in the Economic and Social Development Department: The Committee on World Food Security is linked to the Agricultural Development Economics Division, and the Committee on Commodity Problems is linked to the Trade and Markets Division. The Committee on Agriculture is linked to the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department. These subject-matter specific committees do not only guide FAO's policy work, they constitute in themselves important fora for global agricultural policy-making and provide an opportunity for FAO to exercise global leadership on important policy issues, such as food security.
76. The Regional Conferences have existed since the early years of FAO's existence, but they assumed the status of governing bodies of FAO only during the decentralization process. Hence, their role in governing FAO's work, especially at the regional level, can still be seen as evolving. The IEE (2007: 40) noted that the "Regional Conferences should contribute to governance but they have not, and currently only have a marginal input into central governance." As will be discussed in more detail below, this evaluation finds that the Regional Conferences need to play an important role in creating accountability for regional and country level policy work (**see Recommendation 2**).

3.2.2 Resources for FAO's Policy Work

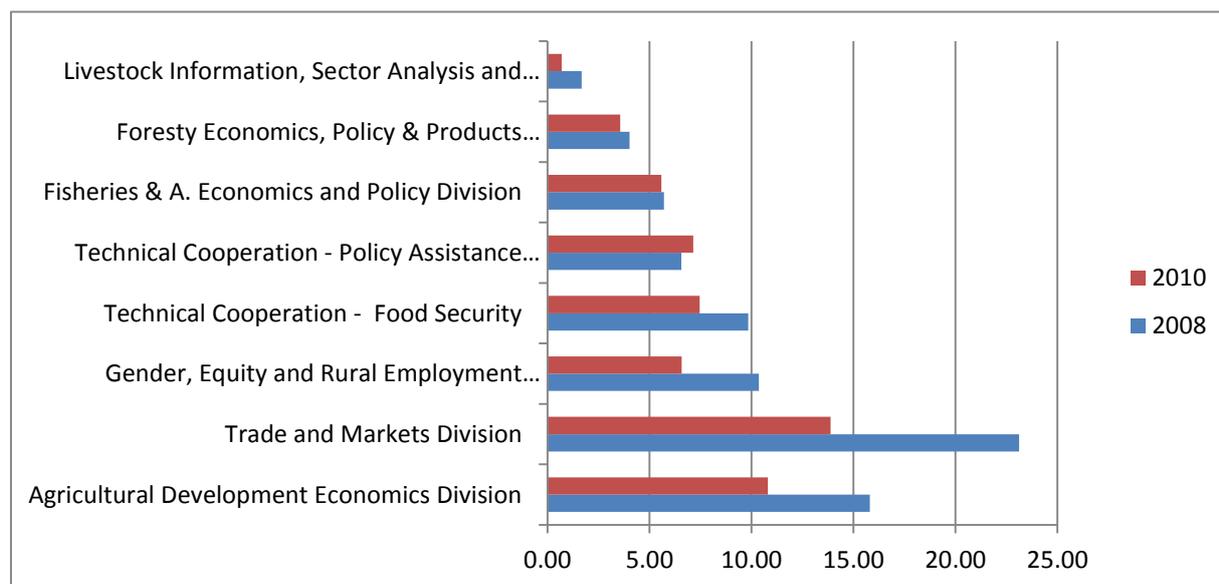
Financial resources

77. Figure 6 displays the expenditure of the divisions that have been identified as policy-focused above for the biennium 2008-09 and part of the 2010-11 biennium. The figure reflects actual expenditures of Regular Programme funds (i.e., not including extra-budgetary project funds), for the Headquarters units. As can be seen from the figure, the Trade and Markets Division had spent the largest amount of funding in 2008-09 and 2010-11, followed by the Agricultural Development Economics Division, the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, and the policy-focused units in the Technical Cooperation Department. Among the three sub-sector specific policy units, the one in charge of fisheries and aquaculture had the highest budget, followed by forestry and livestock.²⁶

²⁵ The IEE "found the Governing Bodies of the Organization to be performing poorly with regard to the internal governance of FAO. The low level of mutual respect and understanding between some Members within the Governing Bodies and between some Members and management has produced attitudes and a culture which set a tone and promote a value system not conducive to good governance practice. The Governing Bodies have suffered from politicization and a growing divisiveness. One major factor causing conflict has been the misunderstandings and false dilemmas created over the normative versus the technical cooperation functions of FAO." (IEE, 2007: 40)

²⁶ The budget figure for the policy unit in the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Department (TCER) was not available.

Figure 6: Budget of policy-focused divisions (Million US\$) for biennium 2008/2009 and part of biennium 2010/2011 (not including extra-budgetary funds)

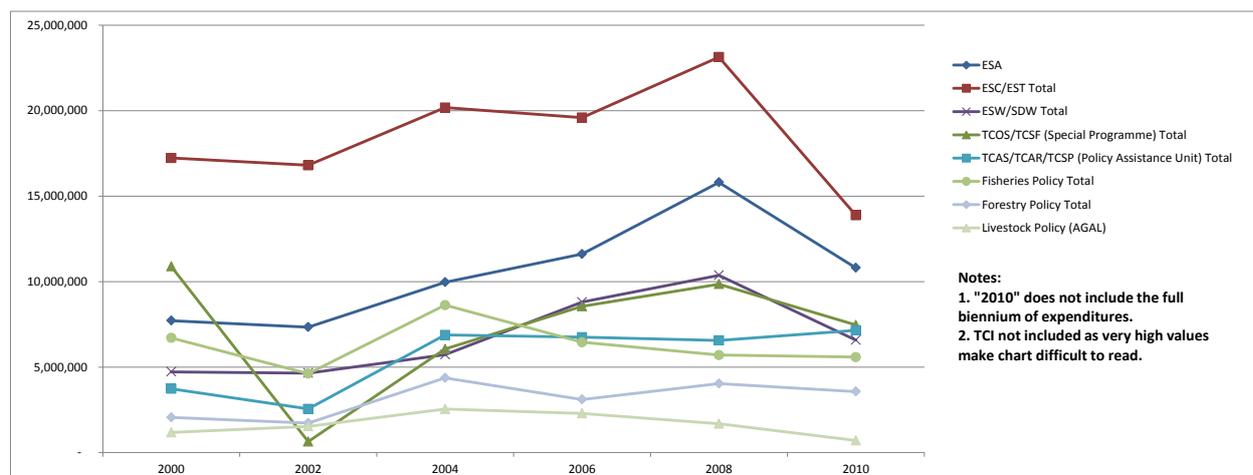


Note: "2010" does not include the full biennium of expenditures.

Source: FAO Office of Strategic Planning and Resource Management (OSP)

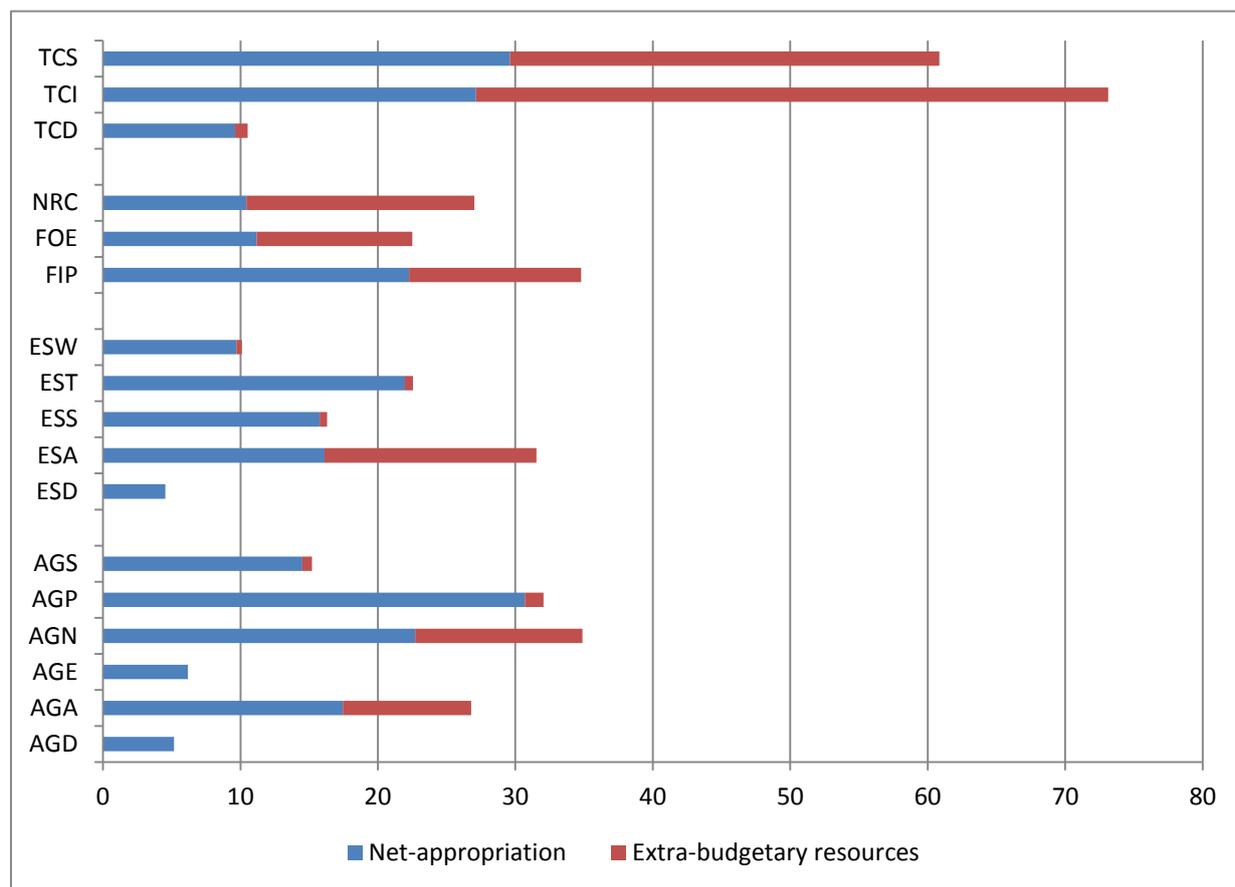
78. Figure 7 indicates changes over time in the funding of the policy-focused divisions or their respective predecessor units. Since 2010 does not include the full figures for the biennium, it is more useful to interpret the trend until 2008. Accordingly, the policy unit in charge of livestock saw a slight decline in funding. The policy units in charge of fisheries and forestry funding had stagnating trends, whereas funding for the other policy units increased.
79. The total budget of the policy-focused divisions displayed in Figure 6 (not including TCER) was USD 77 million for the 2008-09 biennium, which corresponds to an annual budget of approximately USD 38 million. This figure does not include the budget for policy officers and policy work in decentralized offices. The respective budget figures were not available.
80. To place the budget allocation for the policy-focused divisions in perspective, Figure 8 displays the budget allocation according to the 2012-2013 Plan of Work and Budget for selected Divisions, distinguishing between net appropriations and extra-budgetary resources. Unlike the figures above, Figure 8 includes extra-budgetary resources. The Emergency Division (TCE) is not included in the diagram since its extra-budgetary resources are one order of magnitude higher than those of the other divisions (USD 780 Million). As can be seen from the diagram, the Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA) is the only division in the Economic and Social Development Department (ES) that has, according to the figures presented in the 2012-2013 Plan of Work and Budget, substantial extra-budgetary resources.

Figure 7: Changes in funding of policy-focused divisions over time (not including extra-budgetary resources)



Source: FAO

Figure 8: Budget Allocation according to Plan of Work and Budget 2012-13 (million US\$), including extra-budgetary resources



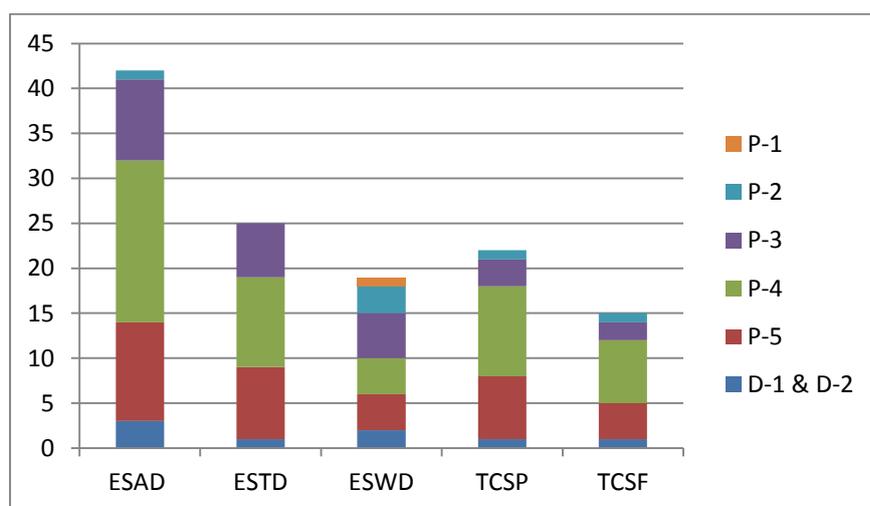
Source: FAO, PWB 2012-2013

Human resources

Headquarters

81. Figure 9 displays the number of Professional Staff in the policy-focused division by grade level.²⁷ In 2011, the total number of Professional Staff in the policy-focused ES and TC Divisions was 123, out of which 42 were senior staff at P5 or D-levels. Most of these staff is placed in HQ. ESA had four staff members in the field, TCSP two, and ESW one. The other two Divisions did not have staff posted in the field. These figures do not include staff hired on a project basis. With a few exceptions, this count does not include the policy officers that are linked to these Divisions that are placed in the decentralized offices (see below).²⁸

Figure 9: Professional staff in policy-focused divisions



Source: FAO, HR-division

82. In assessing the overall staff capacity of FAO for policy work, one also needs to take into account that policy work is also carried out in the Investment Centre. The number of staff working on policy is difficult to determine since TCI is organized according to regions. However, the post titles may give an indication. Out of the 80 professionals in TCI, 16 have the post title Senior Economist or Senior Agricultural Economist, 21 have the post title Economist or Agricultural Economist, and 4 are Rural Sociologists.

Decentralized offices

83. Following the IEE-recommended decentralisation reform which was to place Regional Office policy officers in Sub-Regional Offices, the number of positions for policy officers in decentralized units declined from approximately 40 to currently 20 positions,²⁹ as posts were removed from Regional Offices, but then not transferred to Sub-Regional Offices.

84. At the country level, FAO has 74 fully-fledged country offices headed by an internationally recruited FAORep, and another 50 countries are served through other types of FAO country representation. As shown on the map at the end of Annex 2, FAO is present in almost every country of the developing world.

²⁷ Recent staff figures for the policy units in the technical divisions (FIP, FOE and AGAL) were not available.

²⁸ The figures for ESA include one D1 level post which has since been eliminated.

²⁹ The figures were provided through interviews with TCSP. Figures from HR were not available.

85. The IEE pointed out (and this Evaluation observed) that FAORep positions are left vacant for extended periods of time in between incumbents. IEE found that the cumulative vacancy rate of over eight months for FAORep posts from 2003 through 2006 was 41% - 22% for periods between 8-12 months and 19% for over a year (IEE, p. 252). Out of the 16 randomly selected countries visited for this evaluation, the FAORep position was vacant in eight of the cases (50%).

Staff qualification

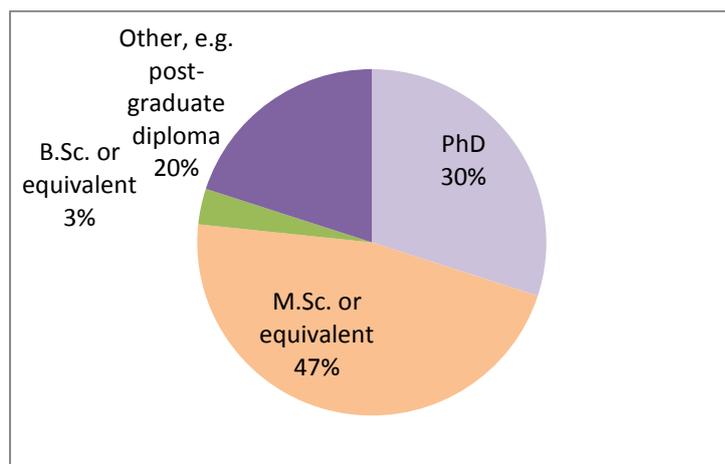
86. Information on staff qualifications is not readily available from FAO's personnel administration. Table 1 displays the position titles policy-focused divisions of ES and TC and in TCI. Information on the type of degree held by staff was available only for 30 out of 206 staff members located in these divisions, as a new system is only now being instituted which will provide updated information on academic qualifications. Thirty percent of the staff for which information was available, hold PhD degrees, 47 percent hold M.Sc. or equivalent degrees, 3 percent hold B.Sc. degrees, and the remaining 20 percent hold other types of degrees, such as post-graduate diplomas. Whether these percentages are representative of the entire staff in policy-focused divisions is, however, unclear.

Table 1: Position titles in policy-focused divisions and TCI

	Department		Total
	ESA, EST, ESW	TCI TCSP TCSF	
Economist	33%	16%	23%
Senior Economist	16%	13%	15%
Rural Sociologist	1%	3%	2%
Communications specialist	3%	1%	2%
Nutrition / food security officer	3%	8%	6%
Gender and Development Officer	5%	-	2%
Agricultural policy support officer	-	11%	6%
Other position titles	38%	47%	43%

Source: FAO, HR

Figure 10: Types of degrees held by policy staff



Note: The graph is based on the information available for 30 out of 207 staff members in ESA, EST, ESW, TCSF, TCSP and TCI

Source: FAO, HR

87. For the FAOREps and Assistant FAOREps (Programme), information on their background is only available from the survey. The figures are presented in Table 2, but they may not be representative, especially since FAOREps with a background in policy might have been more inclined to answer the survey. According to their own assessment, the respondents spend 28% of their time on policy assistance (Table 4). The figure was significantly higher in Africa and the Near East (36%) than it was in Asia and the Pacific (22%).

Table 2: Educational Background of FAOREps and Assistant FAOREps (Programme)

			Degree			Total
			Bachelor	Master or equivalent	PhD	
Position	Assistant FAORep Programme (AFAORep)	Number	2	20	3	25
		Percent	8.0%	80.0%	12.0%	100.0%
Position	FAO Country Representative (FAORep)	Number	2	8	6	16
		Percent	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	100.0%
Total	Number		4	28	9	41
	Percent		9.8%	68.3%	22.0%	100.0%

Source: FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011

Table 3: Field in which FAOREps and AFAORs have their degrees

			Field			Total
			Agricultural economics, rural development, other social sciences	Agricultural production	Other field	
Position	Assistant FAORep Programme (AFAORep)	Number	9	15	1	25
		Percent	36.0%	60.0%	4.0%	100.0%
Position	FAO Country Representative (FAORep)	Count	8	8	0	16
		Percent	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	Number		17	23	1	41
	Percent		41.5%	56.1%	2.4%	100.0%

Source: FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011

Table 4: Percent of time spent by FAOReps and Assistant FAOReps (Programme) on policy support, by region

Region	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Asia and Pacific	22%	13	.20
Africa and Near East	36%	13	.15
Latin America	26%	18	.15
Total	28%	44	.17

Note: Time spent for policy support in Africa is, according to a t-test, significantly higher than in Asia & Pacific (sig. level 0.06)

Source: FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011

Comparison with other organizations

88. This section presents the budgets and professional staff numbers of other organizations working on food and agricultural policy (Table 5). The figures indicate that IFPRI has almost double the size of FAO's policy-focused units in terms of budget and professional staff. IFPRI has been growing rapidly in recent years. IFPRI increasingly runs "Country Strategy Support Programs" with research teams placed in country offices, who do not only conduct research, but also provide policy advice. The World Bank's Rural Development Department has approximately one-third of the budget of FAO's policy-focused units, and approximately one-half of its staff numbers. This figure does not include the staff working on agricultural policy in the regional units and in the research department of the World Bank.

Table 5: Budget and staff of various organizations working on agricultural and food policy

Organization	Total budget per year (US\$)	Total staff Professionals	Comments
FAO – Policy-focused units	38 million (2008/2009)	123	<i>Does not include policy units in Fisheries, Forestry and Livestock</i>
International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)	66 million (2010)	Over 200	Ranked No. 1 in RePEC* <i>Personal communication, staff numbers not in annual report</i>
World Bank – Agriculture and Rural Development Department (ARD)	10 million (2011)	77	<i>Agricultural specialists in the World Bank's Research Department and in regional units not included</i>
USDA Economic Research Service	Approx. 81 million	Over 350	Ranked No. 3 in RePEC* <i>Info from website (may include all staff, not only professionals)</i>
Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Berkeley,	8 million	30	Ranked No. 2 in RePEC* <i>(Further information pending)</i>

*RePEC ("Research Papers in Economics") conducts a ranking for institutions in agricultural economics.

Source: Websites and personal information

3.2.3 FAO's management of policy work

Priority setting and planning

89. The planning for FAO's policy work follows the general planning procedures of FAO. The planning and programming cycle of FAO is in the midst of reform with a new and more important role given to the feedback from decentralised offices. Their priorities now feed up via the Country Programming Framework (CPF) through the Regional Conferences, where Member Countries will now decide on the regional priorities for FAO, into the FAO Conference at global level, where FAO's Strategic Framework, Medium Term Plan and

Programme of Work and Budget are discussed and approved. In this way, national and regional priorities of FAO's member countries are expected to have a direct incidence on the priorities of the Agency, including in the area of policy support. The interviews held at HQ indicate that for the fisheries and forestry policy work, the Committee on Fisheries and the Committee on Forestry play a significant role (see Figure 5 on the structure of governing bodies).

90. Interviews during the country visits, however, suggested that policy-makers in governments at country level do not yet see this mechanism as an important avenue for priority setting of FAO's policy work in their countries. Instead, ministers of agriculture typically express their priorities and demands directly to the FAORep in the country, and so far, small FAO-funded Technical Cooperation Projects (TCPs) have played an important role in fulfilling country demands. Under the new planning procedure, TCP projects are to be aligned with the Country Programming Frameworks, but the Team found it too early to assess to what extent this mechanism works in practice.
91. In fact, the CPF preparation process has a considerable potential for country-driven priority setting as is meant to be carried out entirely at policy level with national authorities and wide stakeholder consultations. The guidelines for the CPF preparation indicate that there is no need to conduct a very detailed assessment of the situation of food and agriculture if a good diagnostic exists in the country. The guidelines also point out that if a good diagnostic does not exist FAO should offer its services to prepare one. There are cases where a sector analysis including economic modelling is conducted as an input into a CPF, though this is beyond what is recommended for this exercise.³⁰ As further discussed below, this evaluation finds that FAO needs to increase its efforts to provide good "policy intelligence" at country level as a basis for priority setting and policy assistance. This "policy intelligence" would also inform the CPFs (see **Recommendations 1, 2 and 6**).
92. In case of policy units that have substantial external funding, such as the Agricultural Development Economics Department, the agencies funding specific projects seem to have far-reaching influence on the type of work carried out, as well. For example, FAO's substantial work on pro-poor livestock policy was driven by a large DFID-funded project, which pursued this goal in line with the livelihoods focus of UK's development policy. Likewise, the choice of countries where FAO conducts substantial in-country policy work through specific projects seems to be largely influenced by donor's willingness to support policy work in those countries rather than a strategic plan developed by FAO. If policy projects are managed by policy units located at Headquarters but include studies at the country level, the choice of countries seems to follow a combination of research-related and pragmatic considerations (willingness of countries to cooperate, donor preferences, research-related considerations). According to interviews, the choice of countries on which the Policy Assistance Support Service (TCSP) focuses its efforts is not driven by a strategic plan, but rather by requests from countries and their willingness to collaborate.

Quality control, evaluation and impact assessment

Quality control of policy work

93. At the HQ level, quality control is typically exercised through clearance procedures according to the reporting lines within the respective divisions and departments. There are not many hard rules, other than the fact that "flagship" publications, such as the SOFA and SOFI reports, have to be cleared by the Director General's Office. Other than that, "major" departmental

³⁰ For example, in Myanmar FAO had assembled whatever data were available to make the CPF effort somewhat analytical; in India the wide consultation process was very well received by many of the stakeholders involved.

publication and policy briefs need to be cleared by the ADG/Head of Department, though there is some leeway in determining what is "major." Policy work (or any other technical work) at the country-level conducted by external consultants is supposed to be cleared by a technical officer at a higher level (SRO, RO, HQ, according to where the required specialist is located). However the evaluation encountered situations in which for expediency project documents were cleared by the country office staff or the FAORep, even if the office did not have a policy expert. Likewise, even though it should be, the policy work conducted by policy officers in Sub-Regional offices is not always reviewed or cleared by the policy units at HQ level. The concerned staff should pass on such documents for review; the extent to which this happens seems to differ across divisions.³¹ Interviews indicated that TCSP has limited opportunities to control the quality of the work of policy officers in sub-regional offices or of the consultancy work commissioned by them.

94. The interviews suggest that staff seem to be more content with the clearance procedures at their divisions or department than with the clearance by the Director General's Office due to the often "political" considerations which determine decisions in that office. Another problem identified was receiving reviews that were too unspecific to be helpful to the authors.

Monitoring

95. As this evaluation indicates, FAO does not clearly distinguish work with policy content from other technical support, and information is therefore not organized in a way that makes it easy to separately monitor "policy work" across the Organization. For example, it turned out to be rather difficult to cleanly break out staff numbers, budget figures and publications related to the policy work carried out in different parts of the Organization. Partly, this can be seen as the consequence of the fact that policy work is widely spread (horizontally and vertically) throughout the Organization.

Evaluation of policy work

96. FAO's efforts in evaluating its policy work prior to this evaluation are summarized in Chapter 2. At the project level, FAO's Office of Evaluation conducts evaluations of projects that are larger than USD 4 million, while smaller projects are evaluated as part of thematic or country evaluations. Until 2006, a questionnaire was administered following each project evaluation summarising the outcomes of the evaluation, and this information was kept in a database which was used for annual reporting. With the greatly diminished number of project evaluations as FAO's field programme shrank, this system was abandoned. An analysis of the evaluations of policy projects from the old database was not possible as it turned out that the data are not accessible any longer due to a change in computer systems. Hence, the organization has no way to track and analyse the experience of its past and present policy work based on project evaluations, which is a concern with regard to the goals of providing accountability and options for learning from experience. The Team was informed that a new system for tracking evaluation

³¹ It might be useful to compare FAO's procedures with that of other organizations. IFPRI's (whose procedures might be of interest for the policy research conducted in the ES Divisions) has a publications review committee headed by an external person, which organizes a review process involving external reviewers, which clears research monographs and other publications that carry an IFPRI logo (subject to a final decision by the Director General. Staff members can submit journal publications without any clearance. Country programme managers clear country-focused discussion papers and briefs together with their Division Directors at Headquarter level. The World Bank has review procedures headed by Bank managers but involving external experts. Staff members needs clearance for submitting journal publications. With regard to flagship publications, the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors (representing the Bank's members) discusses and approves the Bank's World Development Report.

outcomes of all FAO evaluations is currently under development, which is expected to more effectively reflect the lessons from evaluations for the future.

Impact assessment of policy work

97. In recent years, organizations such as the CGIAR centres have been “forced” by donor agencies to identify and document their impact and create an “impact culture” in their organizations.³² Since the IEE, FAO is expected to make similar efforts. With regard to policy work, it has long been acknowledged that impact is difficult to determine because of the “attribution problem”, that is the difficulty of attributing concrete policy changes and, what is even more difficult, the downstream outcomes of changed policies to policy support provided by international organizations. Still, organizations can make efforts to document, analyse and assess the role that their activities may have played in pursuing concrete policy changes at the country level, so as to find strategies to improve the impact of the respective organization’s policy work. The evaluation did not find any indication that FAO is yet moving into this direction with regard to its own policy work, though it has recently begun working for the first time systematically on capacity development for monitoring impacts of policy changes in countries. In fact, the interviews with staff suggest a predominant view that impact assessment of FAO’s policy support work is neither possible nor desirable. As further discussed below, this evaluation concluded that creating an impact culture will be essential to improve FAO’s work, especially at the country level (see **Recommendation 2**).

3.2.4 Human resources and financial management

98. FAO’s management was intensively analysed by the 2007 IEE, among others on the basis of extensive staff surveys. The results of the questionnaire that captured staff perceptions regarding their work environment are available disaggregated only by departments, not by divisions. Hence, it is not possible to assess whether at the time of the survey, there were significant differences in perceived work environment between policy-focused divisions and the others. The results disaggregated by department show that staff perceptions in the Economic and Social Development Department and in the Technical Cooperation Department did not differ significantly from the average perceptions in the Organization. It is likely that the policy work was affected as much as other kinds of work by the general problems observed at the time, such as the hierarchical and overly bureaucratic nature of the Organization. Less than 40 percent of the respondents in the ES and TC departments were content with the Organization’s review and clearance processes, and only about half of the staff found the criteria used for performance evaluation appropriate. Likewise, only about half found it easy to interact with individuals in work groups located in other divisions. Still, in spite of these shortcomings, indicators of job satisfaction were rather high. The reforms triggered by the IEE are expected to lead to a reduction of the observed problems. One major strategy has been to further decentralize so as to simplify processes and make the Organization less hierarchical. The implications of this process for FAO’s policy work are further discussed below.

³² The CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council has a Standing Panel on Impact Assessment. The CGIAR centers have to conduct impact assessment studies of selected major projects, and they have to collect indicators that capture their efforts to promote an impact culture within the organizations, such as number of seminars held on the topic. Staff members are encouraged to document the activities they undertake to increase the impact of their research, including policy research.

4. Recommendations from Past Evaluations

4.1 *Results of Earlier Evaluations Regarding FAO's Institutional Set-Up, Resources and Management for Policy Support*

99. Over the ten years covered by this evaluation, there have been a number of different assessments of FAO policy work in different contexts. Leaving aside evaluations of other areas which also covered some policy work (reviewed in the “Meta-synthesis of FAO evaluations” in Annex 3), there have been four important exercises specifically looking at policy support which have provided a backdrop for this evaluation, and which are described below, followed by an summary of what they recommended on the three areas of investigation of the FAO corporate setup used in this evaluation. Needless to say, the reforms and progressive decentralisation of FAO in recent years along with tightened budgetary and staffing resources imply a need for updating insights from earlier evaluations.
100. It should be noted that it was repeatedly observed by interviewees, in particular those working in the policy units TCSP and ESA that, while many excellent recommendations had been made over the years for the strengthening of FAO's policy support work, very few of them have ever been implemented. This posed the interesting question for the evaluation Team of why this might be. As the assessment of the factors that could lead to such inertia is related to the review of the institutional context of policy work in FAO, an attempt to explain this inaction can be found below in Chapter 4 on Corporate Issues, section 4.8.1.
- 4.1.1 *2001 Evaluation of FAO's Policy Assistance (Cooperation with Member Countries in the Development of National Policies in the Period 1994-99)*
101. This was the last full evaluation of FAO policy work conducted by the Office of Evaluation. It was conducted in 2000 and presented to the FAO Programme Committee at its May 2001 session. As its title indicates, this evaluation “*addressed activities to directly assist countries in policy development, and not normative policy work.*” In addition, “*the evaluation concentrated on policy formulation and excluded policy implementation.*” In these two areas it differed from the present evaluation, which is a wider review including policy work at the global governance and global public goods level, and looking at all phases of the policy process cycle, including implementation and several other steps before and after formulation.
102. The 2001 policy evaluation is nonetheless the starting point for the investigation undertaken in the context of this 2011 evaluation. The methodology employed in 2001 was similar to the one for the current exercise, involving questionnaire surveys to Member Countries, missions to several countries (21 in all) covering all the developing regions, review of materials and discussions in Headquarters and the decentralised offices, and finally review by a panel of experts from outside FAO.
103. The outcome of the 2001 evaluation, interestingly, has much in common with the results of the current one, evidence that on the one hand the issues and difficulties for FAO remain largely similar in the area of providing policy support to its members, and on the other hand that implementation of the earlier evaluation's recommendations may not have been as energetic as was needed to achieve the changes suggested.
104. Early follow-up reporting on the implementation of these recommendations was quite positive, and the current evaluation has presented an opportunity for verification of longer term effects.

4.1.2 2004 Auto-evaluation of the Policy Assistance Division

105. The Auto-evaluation of the Policy Assistance Division (TCA, now TCS) was carried out in 2004 as part of the programme of auto-evaluations of Strategic Framework 'programme elements' which was in place at the time. The exercise focused mainly – as in the case of the 2001 evaluation – on field-level policy assistance to Member Countries, which is the responsibility of TCA. Much useful information and several interesting observations emerged from this exercise, regarding both the process and the content of FAO's policy assistance work. The Auto-evaluation carefully examined the resources available and invested by FAO directly in policy assistance work by TCA, which was defined to include mainly the production of documents (national strategies, sector or sub-sector policies, thematic studies, guidelines and manuals) and the organization of workshops, seminars and courses.

106. In the course of this exercise, an interesting map of FAO policy assistance was produced, which clearly indicated that, at least in the eyes of TCA staff, "almost all technical units are addressing certain aspects of policy," mostly at normative level. The map classified 49 policy areas where FAO is active, and of the 18 divisions considered, only three were found to be involved in *less* than ten policy areas (the Emergency Division, Research and Extension – already in decline at the time, and the Plant Production and Protection Division). As discussed in this report, the observation of the pervasiveness of policy work in FAO reflects the findings of the present evaluation as well.

107. As in the case of the 2001 policy evaluation, several of the recommendations reflect shortcomings encountered in the course of the present evaluation. However the auto-evaluation's focus on outputs, documents, materials and training exercises, differs significantly from the position taken by this evaluation, i.e., that FAO's key role is in supporting and facilitating the policy *process*.

4.1.3 2007 Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE)

108. The Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE)³³ was conducted during the period 2005-07 and reviewed the functioning of the whole agency. As part of this review, evaluations of work in the various technical areas under FAO's mandate were also conducted. These included a review of FAO's policy work, looking mainly at the work of the Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA), the Commodities and Trade Division (ESC) and TCA (now TCS). Two key recommendations emerged from this analysis and are referred to below.

109. However, as regards the present evaluation, the most important observation made by the IEE was its vision of the growing centrality of policy support more generally as one of the key means for FAO to assist its members. The IEE in fact found that policy support was one of the two areas of greatest priority for FAO Member Countries (the other being capacity development). This was contrasted with the existing focus on technical assistance projects, and the IEE concluded that FAO provision of "direct support in the application of production technologies as distinct from appropriate policies and capacities is less and less necessary." (IEE, para. 27c) And again, "There is more opportunity to influence overall national policies through work at the sector level than in projects." (IEE, para. 366)

110. The IEE made several recommendations with relevance to FAO's policy work. Here we have looked mainly at the three most important ones in our view, the first providing a rather dramatic (and never implemented) restructuring of policy work in the renewed organogram of FAO, and

³³ The IEE report can be found at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/012/k0827e02.pdf>

the other two looking more at the policy support work the agency does for Member Countries. These recommendations from the IEE have been carefully considered in the course of the present evaluation.

4.1.4 2008 Policy Assistance Paper

111. The Policy Assistance Paper, an informal document which was only produced in draft, was essentially the reply to the IEE and its recommendations of an ad-hoc group of managers working in the policy units in different divisions. The authors took up the recommendations in the IEE along with various other sources of information on FAO's policy work, and sought to provide a more specific indication of how FAO could best achieve the spirit of the IEE recommendations. In particular, the paper was based on the stated assumption that Regular Programme resources for policy work would increase following the IEE's assessment.
112. The paper was never officially recognised by the Conference Committee on Implementation of the IEE Recommendations (CoC-IEE), and therefore had limited impact, much to the frustration of its authors. However, it represents one of the clearest presentations of the situation of policy work in FAO at that point in time.
113. The paper looked in large part at the role FAO could and should have as the "main source of independent and evidence-based policy advice in its mandated areas." However, again, this paper gave more emphasis to support with policy *products* than with policy processes, as did all of the evaluations reviewed here.

Past Recommendations Relating to FAO's Institutional Setup for Policy Support:

114. As noted in section 2.3.2, this area is about the way in which the boxes are arranged in the FAO's organigram, covering both the HQ department/division structure ("horizontal" structure), and the decentralized structure ("vertical" structure).
115. The 2001 Evaluation of FAO's Policy Assistance made recommendations with regard to improving both decentralised and HQ structures. These included the following:
- Strengthening integration and working procedures in the **Regional Offices** with clear regional priorities, better defined lines of responsibility and more interdisciplinary work;
 - Providing greater support to **FAO Representatives** in their policy role;
 - Developing the quality of FAO policy development cooperation through (among others) establishing a **HQ Task Force for policy work** to better define priorities and to develop the normative underpinnings and related guidelines.
116. The 2004 Auto-evaluation of the Policy Assistance Division made recommendations mainly focussed on strengthening collaboration across the 'boxes' of the organigram both vertically (closer interaction between HQ and decentralised staff) and horizontally (more interaction between HQ divisions).
- Policy assistance should be reinforced by **more frequent association** of decentralized staff in normative work, and involvement of the same staff in both field and normative activities.
 - **Drawing lessons from field work** (projects) should become a major source for improving knowledge and relevance of policy work.
 - Bi-partite discussions of arrangements for **collaborating with other technical units** of FAO engaged in policy work should be undertaken, with TCA playing a catalytic role in addressing trans-disciplinary issues.

- TCA support from HQ (including through Regional and Sub-regional offices) has to be organized with the final objective of **reaching out to FAO Representatives** at Country Office level.
117. The 2007 Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE), as could be expected, made the most far-reaching recommendation with regard to improving structures in support of policy work of the evaluations reviewed here. It was considered closely by the present evaluation, which has re-proposed a modified form of parts of it. The IEE's recommendation was as follows:
- Recommendation 6.9: Creation of the *Economic, Social and Development Policy and Programmes Department*: The IEE recommends that this department should become the development policy analysis centre of FAO under an ADG, who would function *de facto* in the role of "Chief Development Policy Officer." This department should exercise a much greater and more central role in FAO's knowledge management [than the current ES Department]. The department could comprise three main divisions [and a possible fourth]:
 - a) the Economic, Food and Nutrition Policy Division, which would also include policy assistance (currently the Policy Assistance Service in the Technical Cooperation Department). This would integrate all FAO food and nutrition policy work, including that currently carried out in the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division;
 - b) the Institutional Organization and Policy Division, which would include gender, extension, training, employment, research (policy and institutions), tenure, agribusiness (including marketing) and rural finance (currently in AGS);
 - c) the Statistics and Food Information Systems Division, which would integrate all aspects of FAO work in statistics and food information, including in agricultural trade, commodities and early warning; and
 - d) if and as resources permit and effective sustainable demand is determined, consideration could also be given to adding legal expertise to the department.
118. The 2008 Policy assistance paper in this area did not take a strong position on restructuring, but rather proposed options that reflected the past 'Task Force' recommendation of the 2001 evaluation and the stronger one of the IEE:
- Coordinate and integrate policy assistance work more effectively by creating (three options):
 - 1) a **Policy Task Force** with working groups; 2) a **Policy Unit** managing a fund for policy work that "buys" services from divisions; or 3) a **Policy Centre** assembling a critical mass of policy expertise from the existing policy units.

4.2 Past Recommendations Relating to FAO's Human and Financial Resources for Policy Support:

119. As noted in section 2.3.3, this area is about the human and financial resources that are available for policy work within FAO. Human resource capacity for policy work is about the number of staff involved and their skill/experience level. The issue of policy skills – or lack of them – of FAO technical (scientific) staff is an important one in view of the observations of the evaluation on the amount of policy-related work done by technical staff. Assessing adequacy and effectiveness of financial resources for policy work provides another important element in understanding how FAO policy work is done and how it could be improved.
120. The 2001 Evaluation of FAO's Policy Assistance made recommendations which considered that it was unlikely that resources available would increase, and therefore what was needed was more efficient and effective use of what was there. It also considered the need to work more

intensively with transition countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, countries that were new to FAO in many cases and had pressing needs for policy development.

- Expand the reach and impact of FAO's limited resources by strengthening work through *partnerships*. This included influencing UN country processes to ensure adequate attention to food security and the agricultural sectors in macro policy, including policies for poverty alleviation and livelihoods.
- Strengthen flexibility in the responsiveness of FAO technical cooperation, including:
 - a) strengthening the ratio of non-staff resources to staff through elimination of posts and mobilisation of donor funds. In particular it is envisaged that the ratio of staff to non-staff resources be stabilised and the possibility considered of establishing policy cooperation funds on a global or regional basis; and
 - b) streamlining in arrangements for the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP).
- Improve services to the CIS (ex-Soviet Union) and similar ["transition"] countries through the establishment of specialist capability.

121. The 2004 Auto-evaluation of the Policy Assistance Division was particularly concerned with ensuring that staff capacities included exposure to both field activities and headquarters normative work. It also considered cost savings through use of secondary materials where available.

- **Capacity development** of staff should be reinforced through involvement of decentralized staff in HQ normative work, and through frequently assigning staff to be involved in both field and normative activities.
- To reduce costs of production, TCA should consider outside *partners' materials* as part of the supply to be made available to TCA users, allowing greater selectivity in TCA's own production of outputs.

122. The 2007 IEE did not make specific reference to resource issues in its recommendations related to policy work (though of course it made many in other parts of the report).

123. The 2008 Policy assistance paper was especially concerned with the reductions in staff positions that had taken place in earlier years. It also considered the importance of having better policy capacity in decentralised offices, which is a major conclusion of the present evaluation as well.

- **Develop FAO's capacity** for policy intelligence and preparedness.
- Assemble a **critical mass** of policy staff with the required mix of expertise, and establish an internal capacity development and quality control mechanism for policy.
- Develop the policy capacity of **FAO Country Offices** by training FAOREps or providing policy staff.
- Improve the policy capacity of **Regional and Sub-regional Offices** by providing policy officers and/or establishing policy teams of regional specialists in HQ.

4.3 *Past Recommendations Relating to FAO's Management of Policy Support*

124. As noted in section 2.3.4, this area is about how FAO prioritises, plans, executes, monitors and evaluates its activities in the field of policy, and how it manages its financial and human resources to do this. This also touches on FAO internal procedures and their effect on the Organization's capacity to respond to demand for policy work, from global to country level.

125. The 2001 Evaluation of FAO's Policy Assistance looked at some of the aspects of policy support management, and in particular prioritisation of policy work.

- Develop clearer priorities in policy work including:
 - a) changing the balance of FAO's policy work in favour of fisheries and forestry,
 - b) increasing work at the sub-sector level,
 - c) strengthening focus on the technology-policy interface,
 - d) developing priorities for groups of countries (regions, levels of development),
 - e) emphasising the LIFDCs, and
 - f) increasing attention to advocacy and awareness raising.
- Work in capacity development [of member country government staff], with the emphasis on issue identification (rather than sophisticated techniques) and strengthening the broad-based capabilities in agricultural ministries to participate as partners in macro-policy discussion and analyse the cost-benefits of their own programmes. In training, FAO should regard *itself* as much a resource for others as an executor of training and more clearly identify target audiences;
- Develop the quality of FAO policy development cooperation, including:
 - a) the issue of guidelines for policy work;
 - b) improving project design, in particular as regards recognition of the point on the policy continuum that the project is intended to impact, the expected policy outcome and the consultative process;
 - c) improving country intelligence, using a web-based solution.

126. The 2004 Auto-evaluation of the Policy Assistance Division was more concerned with the way in which the policy work was managed, including monitoring, though not to the level of results, limiting itself to recommending better output monitoring. Country intelligence is considered for improvement, as it was in the 2001 evaluation. The current evaluation has once again underlined the importance of developing an effective system for country policy intelligence.

- **Improving information exchange and dialogue** among the different units in TCA should have high priority.
- **Dissemination of outputs** must be regarded as a critical element of TCA's work, at par with their production. A strategy should include identification of target users and of means to reach out to them, a combination of publicity about and distribution of materials.
- An **efficient monitoring system**, based on outputs delivery rather than on activities, and bringing to light the expected end results of activities, should be elaborated. This should include rather frequent overall programme reviews within each year, and periodic in-depth reviews of strategic issues and audience needs.
- A constructive review of the existing **Country Policy Profiles** should be conducted to draw best practices for their production and updating.

127. The 2007 Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE) had very strong messages (mentioned earlier) with regard to prioritising policy work in FAO. These took the form of general recommendations ('overarching messages') as well as some more specific recommendations.

- The initial chapter of the IEE identifies 15 'Overarching Messages' for FAO's future. Several point to need for FAO to focus most of its work at the policy level. *Message 5* in particular (IEE, para. 15) underlines that "FAO's future relevance and effectiveness will depend on enhanced strategic and policy capabilities," and that: "Production technologies will continue to be essential, but there can be only limited uptake of these technologies unless the enabling environment of policies, institutions, legislation and infrastructure are assured. It is in these latter areas that FAO should be able to demonstrate its main comparative advantage (...)"After

careful consideration of all the information gathered, the present evaluation supports this view that FAO should focus at policy level in delivering its technical services to its members.

- Again in *Message 8* (IEE, para. 27), the IEE stresses FAO's role as "more of a facilitator," and that it needs to focus on three main areas: global governance and advocacy, national policy, and national capacities. In the words of the IEE report (para. 27), FAO's "a) advocacy must deliver technical policy messages and help drive a global and corporate policy agenda (...); b) policy support must assist countries and the global community to make their own informed decisions (...); and c) capacity building must be delivered as an integrated whole bringing together technical cooperation, access to knowledge, experience and decision-making, with FAO both as a facilitator and provider. (...)"
- The IEE made two specific recommendations about the policy work it reviewed. The first, Recommendation 3.18, focused mainly on nutrition and on commodities and trade work, encouraging FAO to "form a more systematic and differentiated assessment of the economic, social and food and nutrition policy support needs of its developing member countries" (IEE, Rec 3.18, para 645). This would lead to a clearer differentiation of comparative advantages, better division of labour and greater use of partnerships with other providers of policy support (such as IFPRI). These matters are further considered in the present evaluation.
- The second recommendation about policy assistance work, Recommendation 3.23, more specifically pointed to the need for FAO to provide strong policy support at the level of the macro-sector interface; carry out policy work drawing together technical specialists with economists and sociologists; and follow through on its advocacy work to support policy development that can operationalise that advocacy (Rec 3.23, para 661). The present evaluation examines these issues, including the roles being played (or that should be played) in FAO policy work by social scientists more generally.

128. The 2008 Policy assistance paper had the following recommendations to add in this area:

- ***Strengthen communication and dissemination*** of policy products and messages.
- Increase effectiveness of management of policy assistance activities by:
 - a) improving use of ***TCP funds***,
 - b) developing multi-donor partnership programmes,
 - c) using an outcome orientation, and
 - d) strengthening policy and investment linkages.

4.4 Recommendations of Past Evaluations on Focus Areas for FAO's Policy Work

129. Over the ten-year period covered by this Evaluation, the key thematic areas of interest of FAO in policy work have evolved with time and current thinking. Three of the evaluations reviewed provided some indications of where they considered that FAO should be placing greatest emphasis. These are listed below by evaluation, and then summarised at the end of this section in a table, by policy area.

130. In the 2001 Policy Evaluation, the investigation considered the areas of demand from countries as well as those where FAO was being most active and/or had a comparative advantage. Areas where FAO was most active and most appreciated were

- **trade**,
- **property rights** and access to land,
- **forestry** and management of fragile ecosystems, especially uplands,
- **fisheries**, and
- **genetic resources**.

131. The evaluation indicated areas where FAO was most active in advocacy:
- **food security** (household and national),
 - **fisheries** management, both inland and marine,
 - **forestry** management,
 - importance of the agricultural sectors in **rural development and livelihoods**,
 - **pesticides and pest management**, and
 - **food safety and standards**.
132. However, in fisheries and forestry policy, although FAO was clearly the best supplier (comparative advantage), the evaluation noted that in fact too little was being done. Also, it pointed out that general agricultural sector policy was an area where countries were much less likely than in the past to want FAO assistance, both because there were other strong suppliers (IFIs in particular) and because FAO was not the best suited to carry out the type of economic analysis needed for such strategies in more complex economies. Other areas where the evaluation determined that FAO should have had more activity due to strong demand and lack of other suppliers, were:
- **water and irrigation**,
 - **research and extension** (innovation and learning),
 - **rural livelihoods** (entrepreneurship), and
 - **non-government services** for agriculture and rural development.
133. The 2004 TCA Auto-Evaluation came up with a different set of priority areas for policy work, expecting that in the years to come, policy work conducted in TCA units would converge towards these six areas:
- **trade, competitiveness and regional integration** (trade policy, World Trade Organization, diversification, competitiveness, regional economic communities).
 - **macro and sector policy reform** (including institutional reform, role of public and private sector, macro-sector policy harmonisation).
 - **sustainable natural resources management** (water, land, forestry and fisheries).
 - **financing agricultural development** (policy support to investment in production, marketing and value added chains, support to agriculture).
 - **rural development** (cross sectoral linkages, off-farm enterprises, rural organizations, infrastructure and rehabilitation, gender, decentralisation).
 - **technology/policy interface**³⁴ (including production technology, biotechnology, etc. – an area heavily dependent on policy services of technical departments).
134. Key areas mentioned by the 2007 IEE with regard to the need for stronger policy support were:
- **nutrition**, which should be fully integrated into policy, as part of work on the **crops sector** for food security
 - medium-term **commodity market analysis**, including commodity analysis for dynamic products, which provides a basis for policy assistance
 - creating an enabling environment for **business and private sector development** in agriculture and rural development, for employment and income generation
 - implications of technology for policy, such as in **intensification, biotechnology, mechanization and agricultural industrialization**
 - **Fisheries** (marine and inland)
 - **Forestry**,

³⁴ This expression, used in the report of the 2001 *Evaluation of FAO's Policy Assistance*, refers to multi-disciplinary policy work involving "systematic knowledge of the technical arts".

- **International agreements** like Codex and Food Standards, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the Control and Management of Epidemic Pests and Diseases,
- **land management and water management**, though FAO's capacity was found weak for water

135. For the present evaluation, there had already been some further evolution, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, including for example the growing emphasis on climate change, biofuels, disaster risk reduction, food price policies, etc. This rather rapid evolution over the ten years indicates the importance of having a strategy that is based on frequent review and discussion, allowing it to be flexible and respond to emerging 'big topics.'

Table 6: Summary of policy focus areas suggested by past evaluations

Policy Area	Recommended by:
Trade, competitiveness, regional integration, commodity market analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Policy Evaluation • 2004 TCA auto-evaluation • 2007 IEE
Property rights, access to land and water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Policy Evaluation • 2007 IEE
Forestry, fragile ecosystems, upland mgt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Policy Evaluation • 2007 IEE
Fisheries mgt. – inland and marine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Policy Evaluation • 2007 IEE
Business and private sector development (creating an enabling policy environment), Rural livelihoods (entrepreneurship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Policy Evaluation • 2007 IEE
International agreements on genetic resources, food safety and standards, biodiversity, plant protection, transboundary diseases, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Policy Evaluation • 2007 IEE
Technology-policy interface, implications of technology for policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2004 TCA auto-evaluation • 2007 IEE
Pesticides and pest management	2001 Policy Evaluation
Research and extension (innovation and learning)	2001 Policy Evaluation
Non-government services for agriculture and rural development	2001 Policy Evaluation
Natural resource management (including forestry, fisheries, land and water)	2004 TCA auto-evaluation
Financing agricultural development (investment)	2004 TCA auto-evaluation
Rural development (cross sectoral linkages)	2004 TCA auto-evaluation
Nutrition, as part of crop production for food security	2007 IEE
Macro and sector policy reform	2004 TCA auto-evaluation (<i>but 2001 evaluation said it was NOT an FAO comparative advantage</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change • Biofuels • Disaster risk reduction • Food price policies 	Emerging 'big issues' identified in this 2011 evaluation

5. Findings of the Evaluation on FAO Work in Policy

136. This chapter is structured as follows. The chapter first presents the findings of the evaluation for policy work at global, regional and country levels, and then discusses the findings with regard to FAO's role in different stages of the policy process, taking the "Policy Daisy" as conceptual framework. On this basis, the third section of this section presents the Team's assessment of FAO's policy work with regard to the evaluation criteria presented in Chapter 1.

5.1 Findings on FAO's policy work at different levels

5.1.1 FAO's policy work at global level

137. The context for FAO's global policy work is well described in the 2007 IEE statement that "the virtual explosion of international agencies concerned with agriculture means that FAO now operates in a very crowded field." The IEE noted that in this context, "FAO is expected to exercise regional and global leadership through unifying international development efforts, while at the same time taking into full account the multitude of differing, if not conflicting, interests, viewpoints, and priorities of its constituents. The IEE found that FAO had not responded well to this new challenge and that it was, overall, "adrift, fragmented by its focus on small components of its vast challenge" and characterized by declining capacity, with many of its core competencies imperilled (IEE, p. 35-36). Against this background, this evaluation finds that at the global level, FAO's policy work is characterized by a number of remarkable achievements.

138. The *Economic and Social Department* managed to rebuild the capacity to provide the global public goods that the world expects from FAO and to re-gain intellectual leadership in the "crowded" policy debate on global agricultural development. Following the 2010 report of FAO's Work on Global Perspectives Studies, which underlined the need for FAO's leadership in this field, the ES Department was able to rebuild its capacity for global perspective work. An impressive volume on agricultural development perspectives to 2050 was recently published (Conforti 2011). The Statistics Division (though not the subject of this evaluation) is being rebuilt to continue to provide the data that are indispensable for global policy analysis.

139. The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) report was redesigned and emerged from a type of agricultural statistical yearbook to a globally renowned flagship publication, which provides an informed and balanced judgment on some of the most controversial policy topics in the field, such as biotechnology, bioenergy, international trade, and food aid.³⁵ In fact, SOFA is an excellent response to the challenge put forward by the IEE (2007, p. 36) that FAO needs to fulfil the role of "a global organization to provide an authoritative, objective, respected and politically neutral international platform where these central issues can be examined and decisions taken for collective action." SOFA is prepared in FAO's ESA Division, which also provides analytical support to the revitalized Committee on World Food Security. As the publication record of the ESA shows, FAO has been able to conduct globally relevant policy work on important agricultural policy issues, such as the food price crisis, climate change, payment for environmental services and seed systems. EST (which was subject to a separate evaluation in 2007) continues to provide highly relevant policy research and analysis on agricultural commodities as well as the agricultural dimension of international trade, with a particular focus on the WTO negotiations. Examples of FAO's ability to take leadership in global policy debates include the impact of FAO's work on "climate-smart agriculture" on

³⁵ During the country visits, the Team noted that these themes were also among the most frequently mentioned issues by national governments and stakeholders as topics that require FAO's global attention.

climate negotiations, the impact of FAO's trade policy analysis on WTO negotiations, and the role of FAO's price volatility work for G20 debates. In line with earlier policy evaluations, this evaluation also concludes that the quality of FAO's policy research and analysis favourably compares in quality to that of other international organizations that conduct applied agricultural policy research and analysis and provide policy assistance. (See Annex 6, which presents a review of ESA publications).

140. The *AG, FO, FI and NR Departments* and the Legal Office also conduct important global policy work. With the exception the livestock policy unit (AGAL), they engage less in upstream policy research and analysis than the ES Divisions, because--according to the interviews held for this evaluation--it is their assessment that other organizations provide sufficient up-stream research in their respective fields. Important policy areas for them include the support to FAO's respective Committees on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (see Figure 5) and the promotion of global instruments, such as voluntary guidelines, e.g., the Code of Conduct on Sustainable Fisheries and the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and other Natural Resources (in negotiation at the time of this evaluation). The respective departments are also in charge of monitoring and supporting progress on implementation of these instruments. They also link with other UN organizations, including the United Nations General Assembly if they pass resolutions in the respective subject areas, and with other global standard-setting bodies, such as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). FAO's standard-setting with through the Codex Alimentarius, a joint undertaking with the World Health Organization (WHO), is another example of FAO's important global policy work.
141. The technical departments also conduct global policy work through global programmes, e.g., by engaging in UN-REDD+, as well as by promoting legally binding global treaties. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is an important example. FAO has also been contributed to the growing recognition of the essential role agricultural biodiversity in meeting basic human food security and nutritional needs, and in maintaining ecosystem functions. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture provides a permanent forum where governments discuss and negotiate matters relevant to biodiversity for food and agriculture. Under the guidance of the Commission, Global Plans of Action for both plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture have been adopted and are being implemented, and FAO is also a major partner in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
142. Importantly, FAO's technical departments succeeded in bringing sensitive policy issues to the global agenda, such as governance problems in fisheries, forestry and crop production, and environmental problems in livestock production. They also promote knowledge products of global relevance. An interesting example is AGP's recent publication "Save and grow: A policymaker's guide to the sustainable intensification of smallholder crop production." The guide, which argues for a paradigm shift in agricultural intensification, is in high demand among policy-makers, and it also constitutes an example of strong collaboration between AGP and ESA. The FO and FI Departments also engage in important monitoring tasks, which is reflected in their officially designated flagship publications: the "State of the World's Forests" and the "State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture" Reports. Other "State of" reports have recently been added, such as the State of World's Animal Genetic Resources, and the State of the World's Land and Water Resources (see below for further comments).
143. In assessing FAO's global activities, one needs to acknowledge that these activities contribute to country-level impacts, not only through influencing global policy negotiations, but also by influencing donor priorities. Prior to the food price crisis of 2008, FAO had indeed been one of the few global organizations that continued to fight an uphill battle to keep agriculture and food security on the development agenda of major donor organizations and international financial institutions. The Team noted that FAO has been less successful in taking on a global leadership role on the question of nutrition, even though this topic is also squarely within FAO's mandate.

144. The country visits indicated that developing country governments were also appreciative of the role FAO has played in representing developing-country interests in the international arena. This was voiced even by policy makers in some middle-income countries, who felt that FAO could be called on to question the position of the more-developed countries, particularly with respect to property rights (intellectual, genetic, fishing boundaries, etc.), cross-boundary management issues and trade. These expectations can create a dilemma for FAO, since at the same time the Organization receives funding for extra-budgetary programmes from many of these countries. Despite this, many of the client countries indicated that FAO does usefully help to represent their interests in the global arena. Overall, FAO's role in bringing developing-country issues to the fore in the global discourse is greatly appreciated, according to most of the informants interviewed in the evaluation, whether officials in Member Countries, less developed and other, or in the several international agencies consulted.
145. The global policy instruments promoted by FAO's technical departments have been subject to their own evaluations, therefore this evaluation focuses its conclusions more specifically on the global policy work conducted in in the ES Department, while fully acknowledging the important global policy work conducted in other departments. In this regard, the evaluation strongly recommends protecting the excellent global policy work that FAO was able to build up during the past decade (see **Recommendation 1**). This includes in particular the SOFA and SOFI reports, the support to the Committee on World Food Security and the Committee on Commodity Problems, the Global Perspectives work, and the support of developing countries in global trade and climate change negotiations on the food and agriculture-related issues.
146. With regard to protecting the achievements in FAO's global policy work, the evaluation notes with concern that the withdrawal of central support to the officially designed flagship publications (production services such as editing and translation) has led to considerable challenges for the policy divisions in charge of producing this report. If FAO is unable to centrally provide these services, the Organization may reconsider the requirement of simultaneously launching the flagship reports in all official languages, since passing on these costs to the respective divisions may have negative implications on their portfolio. The evaluation also notes that to maintain FAO's strong reputation for its flagship reports, the new flagships, even if they are not "officially designated flagships" should undergo the same rigorous standards for external peer review as well as for internal review across divisions and departments. Inconsistent quality standards for flagship publications would constitute a considerable reputational risk for FAO.

5.1.2 FAO's Regional Policy Work

147. FAO's regional policy work has several facets. One important facet is facilitating policies that have a *transboundary* dimension, such as promoting regional trade, coordinating economic policies and dealing with transboundary livestock diseases and plant pests, and managing resource systems that are shared by several countries, such as fisheries and water resources. In fact, FAO has played an important role in developing Regional Forestry, Fisheries, Water and other Commissions that serve as platforms for developing policies on the joint management of such shared resources. A second facet of FAO's regional policy work may be seen as using "economies of scale" and promoting information sharing and policy learning across countries by addressing national policy issues in a regional approach, even if the policy issues under consideration do not necessarily have a transboundary dimension. A third facet of FAO's regional policy work is facilitating regional positions in global policy debates. The coordination and collaboration with regional economic integration organizations as well as regional branches of other international organizations (such as the Regional Commissions of the United Nations) plays an important role for FAO In this regard.

148. The evaluation found that the demand for these different types of policy work differed markedly across regions, depending on the challenges faced and the capacity of the existing regional organizations to address these challenges. Based on the insights from visits to countries in different regions and to regional organizations, the following picture emerged:

- **Asia and the Pacific:** FAO can play an important role in generating information and facilitating common regional positions to take to global debates³⁶ but, on the whole, ASEAN institutions are strong, and the main demand for FAO in the region appears to be to assist weaker countries to participate at regional level, including most of the developing island states of the Pacific.³⁷ There was some consistency in interviews that, while the global programmes at HQ were seen as useful, they are not filtering to country level and that more effort needs to be made to provide for broader access to, and uptake of, information generated there. India and Bangladesh appreciated FAO's role in providing a neutral forum for facilitating cross-border collaboration to limit the spread of Avian Influenza. FAO's role in regional fisheries' management was appreciated, as well.
- **Africa:** FAO's major agricultural policy initiative in this region can be seen in supporting the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). As further detailed in Annex 4, this program of the African Union's New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) has played a major role in bringing agriculture back to the centre stage of the development agenda in Africa. The Regional Economic Integration Organizations are playing an important role in the implementation of CAADP. Even though there have been major challenges in meeting funding expectations and in coordination with other international organizations (including UN-ECA, see Annex 4), FAO's role in this important initiative clearly needs to be acknowledged. Africa's regional positions in the global arena are also increasingly important but many of the African regional institutions still face capacity problems, and so there are opportunities for FAO support at the regional level to develop these, and complement the other actors, including the EU, that are heavily engaged in supporting regional institutions. The evaluation Team noted that in the Africa region, FAO assistance tends still be too focused on producing outputs, often directly engaged in playing a lead role in drafting regional policies, or providing specialized expertise, rather than supporting capacity and institution building for policy making.³⁸
- **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Four of FAO's seven regional projects in this region are specifically geared to provide direct policy support, in particular supporting dialogue in development of regional policies in fisheries and in livestock. FAO has also been active in supporting some of the regional work on food security, especially food-price volatility, where it has assisted with the wide variety of policy measures needed to cope with price instability. While FAO has also done analysis of the policies utilized by some countries, it has not identified indicators of what has been achieved with such policies. Also, it has not provided

³⁶ The Fisheries Ministry in Thailand noted that FAO providing support to the regional perspectives at global fora was appreciated.

³⁷ The FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands (SAP) now serves fourteen, mostly quite small, countries. The main function of FAO in the Pacific is to ensure that FAO assistance is readily available to improve people's well-being through sustainable agriculture, natural resource management and rural development. FAO assembles and disseminates information relating to nutrition, food, agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It provides technical and policy advice to support improved decisions on planning, investment, marketing, research and training. Given the micro nature of the public systems supporting agriculture in this part of the world, the role of FAO is critical in overcoming government failures in accessing pertinent knowledge concerning agricultural development, and in helping overcome the diseconomies of size in dealing with topics as diverse as ocean fisheries management and WTO negotiations.

³⁸ E.g. interviews indicate that the support to SADC on Food Security policy is focused on FAO developing the policy and facilitating negotiation between countries, rather than in providing SADC with the knowledge and CD to be able to do this themselves *albeit* that this is at the demand of the client with very limited capacity to formulate themselves.. This brings into question the sustainability of SADC driving Food Security policy in the long term. But FAO does at the same time provide valuable facilitation for SADC member-country buy-in to harmonizing food security policies.

direct assistance to elaborate the 'proper' policy mix. There is a significant challenge in identifying methods to define policies and related investments under conditions of uncertainty.

- **Near East and North Africa:** FAO has had a recognised role in the region in assisting countries in several policy areas, including trade policy (with a focus on the EU), water policies, animal health and transboundary diseases, small and medium enterprise (SME) development, and setting up national agricultural policy centres or 'observatories.' FAO in the past has also played a significant role as neutral partner to facilitate more 'democratic' government policy dialogue with non-government stakeholders (private sector, NGOs, farmers' organizations), and could potentially be an important contributor to formulation of new agriculture and rural development policies in the countries of the "Arab Spring." Stronger institutions in the region mean that while policy action is more difficult at times, impact is also greater. Nonetheless, there is frequent demand for policy capacity development, even from middle-income countries like Egypt. Sub-regional work is important in NENA due to great differences between the three sub-regions that make it up (North Africa, Near East, Gulf).

149. The questionnaire to ministry officials included a question on the perceived usefulness of "regional meetings, workshops etc. to discuss policy issues common to several countries". 79 percent of the respondents considered such meetings as "very useful" and the remaining 21 percent considered them as "somewhat useful", which indicates a high appreciation of country officials for this type of FAO's policy work. Prominent examples of such regional meetings are the consultations held in 2011 on the issue of high food prices. According to the ES Department, they suggested holding such consultations and provided the relevant subject-matter expertise, while TCSP and the decentralized policy officers were in charge of the organization. Around 800 policy makers from countries, regional organizations, the private sector and civil society attended the consultations, which were credited by the US Secretary of State as having contributed to panic reduction.

150. As indicated above, the **Regional Conferences** have now assumed the status of governing bodies (see Figure 5), and they are expected to play a major role in setting FAO's policy agenda for the regions and for holding FAO accountable for its performance. However, the team found that it may still be too soon to assess the contribution of the FAO Regional Conferences in this respect. Still, the Conferences have the potential to bring FAO strongly into regional dialogue and to effectively engage all FAO Departments, and thus make FAO's most current knowledge more accessible to high-level policy-makers in countries in the region. Due to FAO's historical mandate, only Ministers of Agriculture are most actively involved at these Conferences, even though FAO's current work concerns many other ministries in many cases. Too seldom do their representatives join the meetings. FAO's work on developing platforms for policy setting and for knowledge/experience sharing was much appreciated by most people interviewed in the countries, though there were some comments about "meeting fatigue" and the need to find ways to harmonise gatherings and agendas. Moreover, there seems to be a need for information sharing within ministries, since with senior government officials interviewed during the country visits were often not aware of what had been discussed or decided at the regional level. As indicated in **Recommendation 2**, this evaluation finds that additional efforts are necessary to strengthen the role of the Regional Conferences in creating demand and accountability not only for regional, but also for country-level policy work.

5.1.3 FAO's Policy Assistance at Country Level

Potentials and Comparative Advantages of FAO in Policy Work

151. The country visits indicate that the potential receptivity of members-clients for policy advice from FAO is high. Two major reasons contribute to this potential.

1) *Trust of ministries of agriculture in FAO and high access of FAO to top agricultural policy makers*

152. The country visits clearly indicated an almost unfailing trust of the ministries of agriculture of developing countries in FAO. This was reflected in many statements by interviewed ministry staff. In the words of one respondent: "We trust FAO. We do not really trust the World Bank, or the bilateral agencies, which have their own agenda." This trust is clearly linked to the fact that FAO is a membership organization where every country has a voice. The Team heard many statements such as "The FAO ours, we are FAO" or "The FAO is our Organization." In this vein, country governments also expect FAO to act differently from donors. As one senior ministry representative said: "FAO should not join the donors and ask these questions that the donors ask. They should rather be on our side and help to answer those questions." Linked to this trust is the fact that FAO has easy and frequent access to ministries of agriculture, including the ministers themselves. In some cases, such as DR Congo, the FAORep and the minister meet almost every day, and the minister calls the FAORep "mon frère." There is simply no other organization in the field of agriculture that has similar trust and access to the respective ministries. This clearly needs to be recognized as an achievement and an important "capital" of FAO.

153. The interviews suggest that this trust in FAO is due both to FAO's technical capacity and its long track record of providing technical advice to developing countries. In fact, none of the interviewed government officials questioned FAO's technical capacity as an organization. However, there was some criticism of the work done by consultants hired by FAO, which points to problems in quality control. For example, as a ministry representative from Rwanda explained about the policy work done by an FAO consultant: "This was mainly copy-paste from other documents; this is not acceptable to us." The trust in FAO also seems to be due to the role that FAO has played in helping countries to deal with emergencies in the agricultural sector, such as avian influenza. In addition, FAO's recognition at the country level may also be influenced by what one respondent described as "smart staffing patterns". For example, in countries where this is appreciated, FAO hires the FAORep and most project staff from the region. FAO also seems to have made efforts to maintain this trust with governments by not placing pressure on governments in topics that are considered sensitive, such as subsidy policies. The downsides of these strategies are further discussed below.

2) *FAO's role as a global knowledge broker*

154. The country visits indicate that FAO is recognized by ministries of agriculture as a unique organization that can bring global knowledge on agriculture to the countries. This role of FAO was stressed by almost every government representative interviewed for the study with statements like: "The FAO can bring us best practices from other countries." The Team also got the impression that in many instances, governments seem to value this type of knowledge--experience of other countries with regard to a policy issue--much more than analytical work on the issue. One can assume that the receptivity for analytical work on policies is linked to the government's own capacity in this field. Moreover, analytical work may be used strategically according to political incentives. To illustrate the point: One interviewed ex-minister commented on the question of what role the analytical work done by FAO has for him: "You use those studies if they fit your argument, otherwise you ignore them." Analytical studies by other organizations were also often criticized by policy-makers as "academic", "coming out of ivory towers", and "not leading to policy recommendations that can be implemented."

155. Even though the response rate to the questionnaire sent to representatives of ministries of agriculture was rather low (34 responses were received), the results provide some indication of FAO's assessment as a potential source of policy support. As shown in Table 7, More than 40 percent of the respondents who answered the respective questions considered FAO the best provider for policy support in the fields of general agricultural policy and strategy, rural

development and data gathering, analysis and distribution. In the fields of agricultural budgeting, and rural finance, a third of the respondents considered other providers as a better source of policy support than FAO, for international trade policy, the respective figure was 19 percent. In the other policy fields listed in Table 5, FAO is mostly seen as equal to or better than other providers of policy support. The assessment of FAO as a provider of policy support to specific sub-sectors of agriculture, including fisheries and forestry, is shown in Annex 3. The figures show that, with some variations, FAO's is largely rated as an equal or better source of policy support than other providers.

Table 7: Assessment of FAO as a source of policy support

	N	Percent of government officials selecting respective answer		
		FAO best source	FAO equal to others	Others are best source
General agricultural policy or strategy	26	46.2	53.8	0.0
Agricultural budgeting	21	19.0	42.9	38.1
Macro-economic policies that affect agriculture	21	33.3	57.1	9.5
International trade policy	21	23.8	57.1	19.0
Other sectoral policies that affect agriculture	22	31.8	63.6	4.5
Rural Development (including decentralization and area development)	22	40.9	50.0	9.1
Rural Finance	21	4.8	61.9	33.3
Rural Employment and Agricultural Labour policies	19	10.5	84.2	5.3
Equity policies	20	15.0	75.0	10.0
Data gathering, analysis and distribution	25	44.0	56.0	0.0

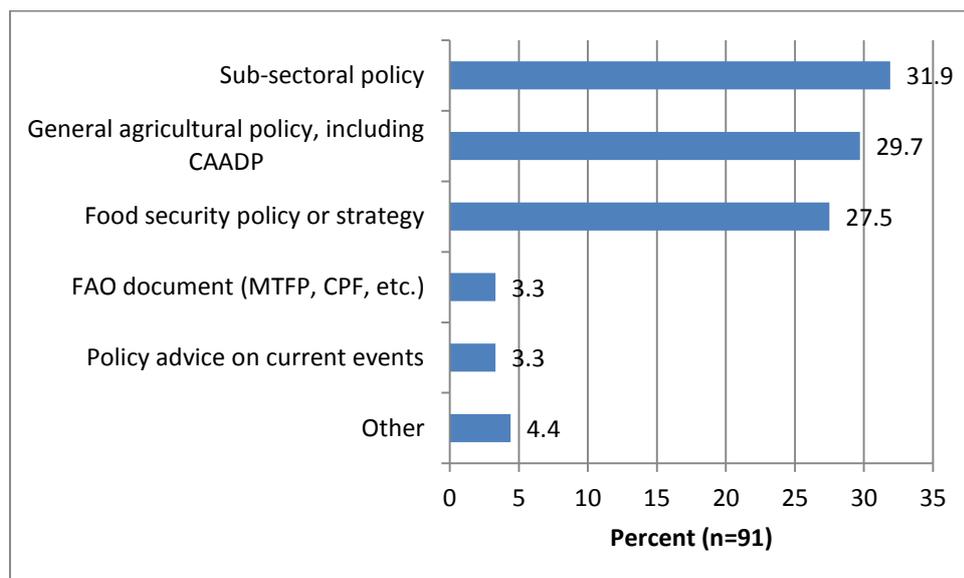
Source: Survey of representatives of ministries of agriculture

1. Type of policy initiatives pursued at country level

156. The previous sub-section clearly indicates that FAO has a strong comparative advantage for policy work as compared to other providers because of the high trust that ministries of agriculture have to FAO as “their organization.” The question explored by the evaluation is: “How well does FAO use its unique potential for country –level policy work?” This sub-section presents the findings regarding the types of policy activities that FAO is pursuing at the country level, and the following sub-sections discuss the challenges and problems observed by the evaluation in country-level policy work.

157. In the countries visited by the Team, the FAOREps were asked to identify the three policy initiatives during the past five years that they considered to be the most important ones. Policy initiatives were defined as activities that “may include policy-related projects as well as other types of activities that had an important impact on the country’s agricultural policy, for example, using technical projects to provide policy lessons, providing personal input or FAO products to policy-makers on request, inviting policy-makers from the country to attend FAO meetings or workshops, and working with other development partners in the context of task forces or working groups, etc.” Using a similar formulation, the questionnaires sent to all FAOREps asked the respondents to identify two policy activities that they considered to be the most important ones in the past five years. The results from both sources of information are displayed in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Policy initiatives to be considered most important by FAOREps and AFAOREps (Programme)



Source: FAOREp/AFAOREp Survey, 2011 and survey conducted during country visits

158. The figure shows that in almost one-third of the policy initiatives considered to be the most important ones were the development of sub-sectoral policies, for example, policies in the areas of plant protection, livestock, fisheries and forestry. The next most important category was the development of general agricultural policies or strategies. In Africa, these were often linked to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). The development of Food Security Policies or Strategies ranked third. Some respondents mentioned initiatives related to FAO's own planning processes, such as Country Programming Frameworks.

159. The amount of resources available for these activities was quite considerable with an average of almost US\$ 900,000 (Table 8). If one excludes projects with a funding volume of 3 million US\$ and above, the average funding for available for general agricultural policies and sub-sectoral policies was around US\$ 200,000, and the average funding for food security strategies was 330,000 US\$.

Table 8: Average funding for policy activities

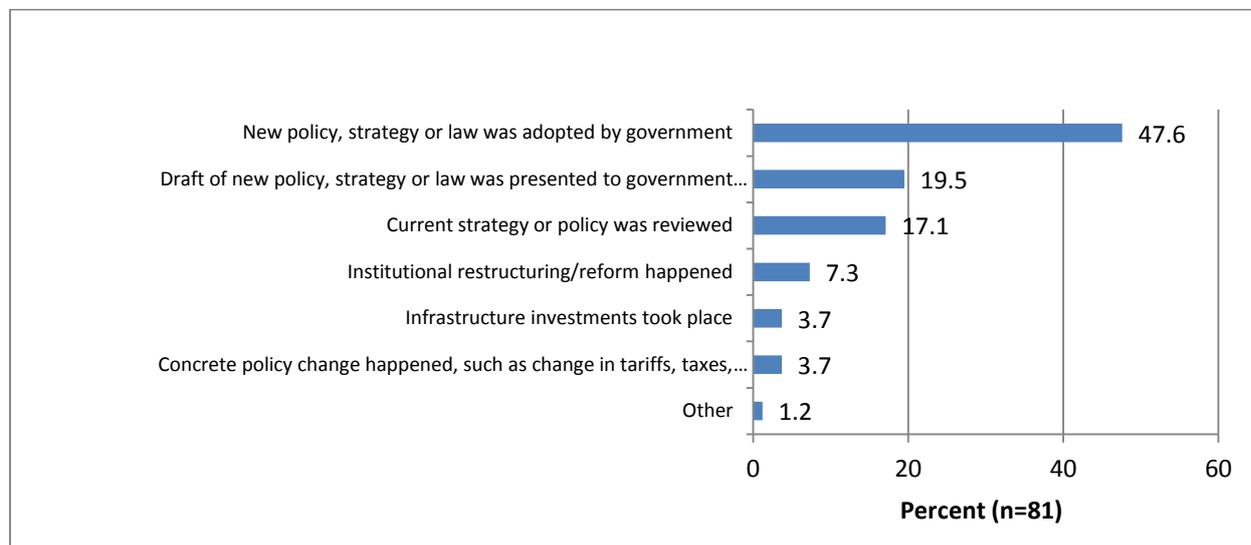
Type of activity	Only projects below 3 Million US\$		All Projects	
	N	Mean	N	Mean
General agricultural policy, including CAADP	20	201,591	21	688,801
Food security policy or strategy	18	330,309	20	1,097,278
Sub-sectoral policy	20	213,465	22	544,059
Policy advice on current events	3	681,667	3	681,667
Other	1	330,000	3	4,110,000
FAO document (NMTPF, CPF, etc.)	1	100,000	1	100,000
Total	63	265,424	70	897,924

Source: FAOREp/AFAOREp Survey, 2011 and survey conducted during country visits

160. The respondents were also asked what the effect of the policy activities was. The results are shown in Figure 12. In almost one-half of the cases, the policy activity did lead to the adoption

of a new policy, strategy or law. In very few cases, the respondents indicated that a concrete policy change, institutional change or infrastructure investment took place. Qualitative information from the country visits also indicates that the policy work at country level had a strong focus on producing and releasing a specific policy document.

Figure 12: Outcome of policy activities identified by respondents



Source: FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011 and survey conducted during country visits

161. The country visits indicated that another important activity at the country level is assisting Member Countries to comply with many of the international agreements FAO has helped to forge, from food safety and IPM, to fisheries and forests, and towards the voluntary guidelines on land tenure.³⁹ In this regard, the interaction between country office staff and that in HQ technical departments and Regional and Sub-regional Offices often worked quite well, especially when the staff at all levels share common views and understand the common task. This was particularly evident in discussions with staff from Food Safety, Plant Protection, Fisheries and Forestry, where global issues appear to be more effectively brought into national policy.

162. While FAO has been effective in providing technical assistance in this respect, FAO has generally been less successful in developing capacity and willingness to allocate resources for compliance, although the Program of Work and Budget 2012-13 declares FAO's intention to seek and apply greater resources for such support through Voluntary Funding. Moreover, there were cases where knowledge management process on a particular topic of interest, usually global, was found to be undertaken without making the country-level implementation process explicit. For example, the translation of global discourse and agreements into country action is still at an early stage for Climate Change, and the same is true for Indigenous Peoples' issues. While gender issues are increasingly being articulated in country support, there was no evidence apparent to this evaluation that gender analysis is routinely incorporated into the analysis of policy options.

³⁹ FAO has been particularly effective with: its Codex work; establishing institutions to address phytosanitary concerns in Member Countries (an especially good example is KEPHIS, the Kenya inspection service); Regional Forest Conferences, which enable sharing on international guidelines and discussions on tough issues with capacity for implementation addressed through the NFP Facility; significant contributions to collaboration in controlling transboundary diseases; and FAO support to compliance with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries as an important success story.

163. With regard to promoting global concerns at the country level, some of the multilateral and bilateral agencies and INGOs accuse FAO of being too heavily invested in state positions, which may not always accord well with its three global goals of reducing hunger and poverty in a sustainable manner. These concerns were also shared by farmers' organizations, the business community and civil society within the countries.⁴⁰ As will be further discussed below, FAO tends to shy away from its potential to influence countries on the really tough issues, such as adoption of export bans among major cereal producers. At the same time, it is the very closeness of FAO with national governments⁴¹ that provides it with its opportunity to facilitate dialogue and influence change in those directions. FAO will continue to have to walk a fine line between being trusted friendly adviser and protector of the greater global public good. This issue is addressed in **Recommendations 1 and 2**.

5.1.3.1 Performance of FAO's policy assistance at country level

164. The country visits indicated that, in spite of the unique opportunities that FAO has for its policy assistance at the country level, the Organization is facing major challenges and performance issues regarding its policy assistance at the country level. The evidence is presented in this sub-section.

Limited focus on policy work in a scattered country project portfolio

165. A review of the project data from FAO's project information system (FPMIS) for the case study countries (including all projects that were active or completed between 2000 and May 2011) indicated the following general patterns: First, the total number of projects was rather large as compared to the number of projects that other international organizations typically implement in one country. A considerable share of projects is Telefood projects, but even without counting those projects, the number of projects is rather high. Table 9 illustrates this general observation for the case of Rwanda. Even in such a small country, FAO implemented a total of 117 national projects (out of which 46 were Telefood projects) during the past decade. In addition, the project data base shows that FAO implemented 37 regional or interregional projects that were relevant for Rwanda.

166. A second observation of reviewing the project data for the case study country was that the share of the policy-focused projects among all projects was comparatively small. For the case of Rwanda, 5 percent of the national projects could be classified as focusing on the development of general agricultural or food security policies, strategies or laws, and another 5 percent as focusing on sub-sectoral policies, strategies or laws. For the regional or interregional projects, the share was higher, but this group includes projects such as support to the NEPAD Secretariat, which do not have direct relevance for Rwanda. Apart from the Telefood projects, the largest number of projects still focus on agricultural technologies or natural resource management practices. The Telefood projects, which are small but also place demands on management

⁴⁰ An example was Benin, where farmers associations were active and felt that they needed more support from FAO to address their concerns about land grabbing and government focus on large-scale agriculture, when the smallholders are producing despite feeling marginalized by government.

⁴¹ Myanmar is an extreme case where FAO claims the engagement gives it the potential to influence change (e.g., greater community empowerment in fishing, better management of natural disasters such as droughts and floods) whereas others are concerned that it reinforces entrenched interests and the ruling elite. FAO has a 30-year history of active engagement in Myanmar, and has included interventions in all the key subsectors including through the multiagency Framework for Action in the Dry Zone. Although currently somewhat isolated from extra-budgetary resources and donor alliance dialogue because of its close association with government, with the political changes emerging, FAO is well placed to facilitate in a changing landscape.

capacity, focus on some aspects of agricultural production, too (such as mushroom cultivation or goat rearing).

167. Obviously, the share in the number of projects, and the share of funding are not the only relevant indicators for the relevance that FAO assigns to its country-level policy work. Other indicators are discussed below. However, the project data still indicate that a major shift in FAO's current country project portfolio would be required to implement the IEE recommendation to focus country assistance more on policy work and capacity development rather than on supporting to production technologies. The large number of projects implemented by FAO at the country level indicates a considerable scattering of activities and efforts, which suggests that FAO could achieve a higher impact by using a more consolidated and policy-focused approach to its country work.

Table 9: Type of FAO projects in Rwanda (2000-2011)

Type of project	National projects			Regional or interregional projects		
	N	% of projects	Mean	N	% of projects	Mean
General agricultural or food security policy, strategy or law	6	5%	140,952	12	32%	1,225,177
Sub-sectoral policy, strategy or law	6	5%	58,899	3	8%	1,896,152
Emergency or post-emergency project	16	14%	486,612	1	3%	1,259,999
Control of livestock or crop diseases	6	5%	175,906	9	24%	2,426,210
Project with focus on agricultural technology or natural resource management	17	15%	276,697	5	14%	2,917,166
Project with focus on household food security	5	4%	176,917	4	11%	2,438,339
Institutional development (marketing, extension, etc.)	8	7%	203,518	2	5%	139,265
UN Joint project	1	1%	758,000	1	3%	260,563
TCP - not specified	6	5%	54,712			
Telefood project	46	39%	4,560			
Total	117	100%	158,572	37	100%	1,847,696

Note: * Funding refers to the entire regional or interregional project, not to the amount spent for or in Rwanda
 Source: Compiled by team on the basis of FPMIS data.

Limited focus on the policy dimension of technical and emergency projects

168. Considering the fact that a large share of the project portfolio is spent on technology-oriented projects, the question arises as to what extent FAO is using these projects to address the policy issues, or the “enabling environment” related to these technologies. There are certainly remarkable cases, where project work was used to build trust with governments, which was subsequently used to steer important policy changes with far-reaching effects. The abolishment of pesticide subsidies in Indonesia in connection with FAO's promotion of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an excellent example, even though happened prior to this review period. The evaluation also found that FAO technical officers often insisted that they had nothing to do with policy and yet when describing their activities it was obvious that most of their work

directly seeks to influence policies.⁴² Many technical officers agreed that they would need assistance to facilitate translation of their technical assistance into effective policy support and a better awareness of impact.⁴³

169. Some successes notwithstanding, the Team observed during its country visits that there was often a “disconnect” between the policy work and the technically-oriented project work. However, in fact, during the country visits, the Team observed that there is no strategy by which project work is *systematically* linked to policy processes to reach such effects. Frequently, technical projects are implemented without any prior analysis of the policy area or policy processes that they could be linked to. For example, the Team could not find that projects follow a standard procedure to conduct an analysis of the “enabling environment” and of institutional and governance challenges that would determine the government’s ability to upscale what is promoted in FAO’s projects. An example is the implementation of a regional Integrated Pest Management in Syria. The project strongly relied on the public sector extension service to implement its project activities such as promoting Farmers’ Field Schools, with the expectation that this type of activities would be continued after the end of the project. Yet, the Team could not find evidence that the project had analysed whether and how the public extension service in Syria would be able to maintain such activities without project support. Similar observations were made in a large-scale productivity-focused project in Sudan.
170. The question arises as to whether this finding also applies to the projects funded under the Technical Cooperation Program (TCP). According to the TCP Manual, such projects require an analysis of whether the requested assistance addresses a “clearly defined critical technical gap or problem that has been identified by beneficiaries or stakeholders” (apart from meeting other criteria such as being linked to FAO’s organizational results). Yet, it is optional and not required to assess whether FAO policy and legal assistance is deemed desirable or necessary in the context of the TCP project being proposed. In fact, the word “policy” does not even appear in the table of eligibility criteria for TCP projects.⁴⁴
171. Against this background, the evaluation concludes that FAO’s policy work in technical areas is still far away from the IEE recommendation (see above) to move from a focus on promoting technologies to a focus on advantage on the enabling environment of policies, institutions, and legislation. This issue is addressed in **Recommendations 1 and 2**.
172. Emergency and humanitarian assistance and post-emergency support meanwhile constitute an important share in FAO’s portfolio (overall, about 50% of FAO’s donor-funded fall in this area). Therefore, one also needs to ask the question to what extent these projects are used to address policy issues and the enabling institutional environment for agriculture and food security. The observations made during the country visits show a mixed picture in this respect. On the one hand, there were examples of how FAO, in the process of providing seeds and other productive resources, and strengthening capacities, FAO contributed to a re-prioritisation of policy work for disaster risk reduction, as may be the case for conservation agriculture, incorporation of indigenous or other marginal groups in a redefinition of tenure, a more

⁴² An example is a regional aquaculture officer who indicated that he was not involved in policy, but after further discussion concluded that most of his work was related to getting countries to address both national and regional policies.

⁴³ This was found to be true across sectors as well as including officers at Headquarters, in regional and in sub-regional offices. An exception was the Fisheries Department policy group, which generally provides policy support to technical officers in the department; in the Regional Office for the Near East, the Policy Assistance Branch – before it was disbanded in 2008 – reportedly provided direct policy support to the regional technical officers.

⁴⁴ See: http://www.fao.org/tc/tcp/eligibility_en.asp

sustainable pest-management programme, and better cross-border animal disease control.⁴⁵ In some cases, the rehabilitation and reconstruction process provided FAO the opportunity to support review and modernisation of pre-crisis policy frameworks, as was the case for fisheries policies in several countries following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. On the other hand, the Team was also confronted with the concern by policy-makers and stakeholders, for example in Sudan, that FAO's approach to distribute inputs and livestock services free of charge was undermining efforts to build sustainable supply systems. In Bangladesh, the Team observed that several years after an emergency (flooding) had occurred, a post-emergency project distributed power tillers and inputs for fish ponds to farmers who did not belong to particularly vulnerable or affected target groups. These observations suggest that, similar to the case of technical projects, a more *systematic* attention to policy concerns may be warranted.

Limited visibility and role in the national agricultural policy dialogue

173. The close relation of FAO with ministries of agriculture was clearly recognized by other development organizations and stakeholders in the countries visited, but many of the interviewed development partners felt that FAO kept a rather low profile and did not sufficiently engage with them and other stakeholders in the national agricultural policy dialogue. This was reflected in expressions such as FAO "works behind the scenes with the Ministry", "FAO is not active in donor coordination groups", FAO is "invisible", "not the go-to people", "you can't feel FAO". FAO representatives saw such type of criticism to be the consequence of their efforts to have governments in the driving seat and play a supportive role rather than promoting themselves and raise their own profile as policy actors. Unfortunately, many of the interviewed development partners did not seem to see this dilemma.

174. Moreover, the lack of an own profile of FAO in policy-making may not only be due to FAO's commitment to having government in the driving seat, but also due to a lacking emphasis and capacity of public relations activities.⁴⁶ Some interviewees observed that FAO does not seem to create strong incentives for its staff working at the country-level to network with other partners. The fact that FAO typically has only one international staff, the FAOREp in the country also contributes to this problem. Still, considering that FAO invests in having a high-profile country office (with a representative of diplomatic status) in almost every developing country, the expectation that FAO plays a more prominent role in the agricultural policy dialogue seems well justified.

Constraints in FAO's ability to leverage funding

175. The fact that FAO's actual influence on political decision-making is also limited by the fact that FAO, which is not a funding agency, is unable to bring much "money to the table." In countries where donor funding constitutes a large share of government budgets (as is the case in many African countries), interviewees pointed out that governments tend to listen to donors that offer considerable amounts of funds, even if they otherwise have limited trust into these donors. One reflection of this is the fact that donor coordination groups in the countries visited for this evaluation were chaired by the World Bank, USAID, EU and other donors, whereas the FAO representative was typically just one of the participants.

⁴⁵ E.g., work in response to emergencies has shown the need for decentralization (Uganda/Tanzania), for reduced subsidies on high tech inputs and investment in more appropriate technologies. FAO has been promoting conservation agriculture in its emergency programmes in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Tanzania and other countries.

⁴⁶ One respondent mentioned that FAO's governing bodies do not want to allocate a sufficient budget for PR type of activities, such as is the successful practice of WFP.

176. Even though FAO does not bring much own funding to the table, the question arises as to what “leverage function” FAO has regarding the agricultural funding of other agencies. Obviously, the Investment Center (TCI) has a considerable role in influencing how the agricultural funding of the international financial institutions is spent. Yet, the policy work that TCI conducts in this context is not always recognized or “visible” as FAO’s contribution in national policy dialogues. It is also worth noting in this context that TCI faces challenges in leveraging the expertise of the staff in the technical and policy units of FAO and therefore largely relies on external consultants. As one respondent remarked, FAO staff does not seem to recognize that their policy impact would be much larger if they provided their expertise through TCI to the large-scale agricultural programs funded by the international financial institutions rather than by pursuing their own little “boutique” projects.
177. The evidence collected for this evaluation also raises concerns about the approach of policy units outside TCI to assist ministries of agriculture in developing investment proposals that are based on the assumption that either the governments themselves or donor organizations might ultimately fund them. The “bankable projects” developed in the early phase of the CAADP process are an example of this approach, which was not conducive to FAO’s reputation. Likewise, the national food security strategies and programs developed with the support of TCSF include detailed plans for investments to be made, but it is questionable whether this effort to raise funding is indeed the most promising approach that FAO could use to promote food security in member countries.⁴⁷ As indicated below, a more thorough analysis of policy bottlenecks and a more *impact-oriented strategy* might be justified. Moreover, as further discussed below, the food security strategies have been—and are still being—developed in parallel to the general agricultural development strategies and investment plans prepared under the CAADP process. The development of country investment plans under CAADP certainly means that they have better prospects of getting funded than earlier such efforts due to the rather strong coordination of development partners in the CAADP process (see Annex 4). The country visits indicated that TCI’s support to the development of these investment plans was highly appreciated. Still, it was the creation of the GAFSP following the 2008 Food Price Crisis that helped to meet the funding expectations of the countries involved, and it remains unclear to what extent those expectations can be met in the future.

Limited country-specific analytical work

178. High-quality policy assistance at the country level needs to be based on a thorough analysis of the agricultural sector of the country under consideration. The discussions held for this evaluation indicate that the need for such analytical work for policy advice is clearly recognized by the ES Department, but otherwise there seem to be rather diverse views within FAO regarding the type of analysis that is needed to support policy work, and the mandate of FAO in this respect. The country visits indicate that FAO seems to have limited capacity and/or incentives to either perform such analytical work (even where it has policy-oriented externally funded projects as in Sudan), or to use existing analyses done by other organizations. The country visits and the FAORep survey indicate that there is also no common understanding as to what is to be considered as research or analytical work that may support policy work. In the FAO-Rep survey, 74 percent of the respondents indicated answered the question “Did FAO

⁴⁷ An explanatory note provided by TCFS states: “Over a period of 14 years (1994-2008), the SPFS pilot phase assisted 106 countries and helped raise USD 890 million - more than half of this amount was provided from the budgets of the developing countries and less than 10 percent from FAO’s Regular Programme (including TCP).” This corresponds to an average amount of US\$ 600,000 per country per year, and it is unclear to which extent these resources can fully be attributed to the development of the food security programs. Moreover, there seems quite some time lag between the development of a strategy and its approval or implementation. Most of the strategies provided by TCFS that were classified as “formulated and under review” in 2011 were dated from 2006 to 2008.

produce or commission research papers or analyses as part of this policy support activity?" with yes. However, the type of documents listed as examples of such "research papers or analyses" were often some existing policy or strategy documents or consultancy reports with limited or no analytical content. Table 10 indicates the sources of existing research papers and analysis that were, according to the survey, used to inform country-level policy assistance.

Table 10: Source of existing research papers and analyses used by FAO for country-level policy assistance

	Percent (n=38)
Government	31.6
Local universities / research organizations	47.4
FAO	5.3
International research organizations	2.6
Other international organizations, e.g. other UN organizations	13.2
Total	100.0

Source: FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011 and survey conducted during country visits

179. In almost half of the cases, FAO relied on local universities and research organizations, which reflects an important and useful effort to use local expertise. However, the table also indicates that FAO hardly works as a broker that makes international expertise available, even in countries where a substantial body of research and analysis produced by international organizations is available.
180. Countries that have specific policy projects can be considered represent a special case, but even in those cases, limitations were observed. In the case of Bangladesh, FAO concentrated on helping NGOs and local research organizations conduct empirical research. This was clearly seen as capacity development, and the quality of the products produced under these arrangements was rather mixed. In addition, the project engaged to a large extent in short-term advice, which was requested and appreciated by the ministry. The project did not engage in large-scale empirical data collection and more long-term analysis, even though the project is well funded. To what extent FAO should engage in this type of policy research is a question that requires further consideration. The case of the increasing number of IFPRI's Country Strategy Support Programs indicates that there is, at least, considerable interest by donors to fund policy advice activities that are linked to such type of policy research.
181. In South Sudan, FAO's Sudan Institutional Capacity Programme: Food Security Information for Action (SIFSIA) established the Food Security Technical Secretariat in the Statistical Office, which makes data from crop assessments widely available through bulletins, a website and email newsletters. While this service is appreciated by stakeholders, the Team could not find evidence that FAO used these data for economic analyses, such as productivity analysis or market analysis, even though FAO also has a productivity-focused project in Sudan. In many of the visited countries, FAO engaged in the development of sub-sector policies and strategies (e.g., on forestry or livestock), but these efforts rarely included an economic analysis of different policy options. The reasons for this lack of attention to more up-stream economic analysis may be two-fold. Interviews with government officials suggest that there is not much recognition by governments for such type of analysis (see above), which may be linked to the low capacity of policy units in ministries of agriculture. For example, some ministries in low-income countries do not have agricultural economists with the type of training needed to absorb this type of work. However, a lack of focus within FAO on this type of analytical work, combined with limited capacity, may also contribute to the problem.

182. In discussions with the TCS Division, the Team was informed that FAO had earlier conducted thorough agricultural sector policy reviews, but this capacity did not exist in the TCS Division of FAO any longer. It was also noted that other organizations had given up or significantly reduced their efforts in this regard.⁴⁸ Against this background, the question arises as to why FAO—as a knowledge organization—is spending so much effort in developing national food security strategies and funding plans while the analytical work that would be required to develop effective and impact-oriented strategies is missing. This issue is addressed in **Recommendations 1 and 2.**

Reliance on “one-size-fits-all” approaches

183. As indicated above, some of FAO's country projects focus on the development of sub-sectoral policies. Though they do not play a major role in the overall project portfolio, they constituted the largest share of the policy activities identified in the survey of FAOREps as particularly relevant (see above). Examples of these activities include the development or update of a national forest policy, a policy for aquaculture development, or a pesticide policy. Government respondents in the countries visited often emphasized that FAO played an important role in introducing new concepts through such sub-sectoral policies, such as community-based approaches in forestry management in Sudan. It was also observed that FAO was able to foster stakeholder participation in such policy processes and sensitize sector ministries that had little history of stakeholder participation to the value of this approach.
184. The evaluation also found, however, that the development of these sub-sectoral policies was often dominated by promoting rather standardized “best practices” or principles and hardly included an *economic, institutional and social analysis of different policy options*, which would allow for the setting of priorities. Likewise, the governance challenges of implementing the well-intended policies foreseen in such policy or strategy documents were hardly addressed. In this sense, the policy work in the technical fields mirrors the shortcomings observed for general policy work at the country level.

5.1.3.2 Underlying reasons for performance issues at the country level

185. This section identifies some of the underlying reasons for FAO's performance problems at country level, which were identified during the country visits. One set of challenges relates to the *demand* for country-level policy work, while others refer to the ability of FAO to *respond*.

Challenges regarding the demand for FAO's policy work at country level

186. Even though staff interviews at headquarters level suggested a uniformly high demand for FAO's country-level policy work, the country visits indicate that the demand for policy work seems to differ widely across countries, and across different groups within the same country. The case of India illustrates this point (see Box 3). Some government officials in India emphasized that policy-making is the prerogative of government, and even though they appreciate FAO's technical assistance, they do not want them to be involved in sensitive policy issues. In Bangladesh, where FAO is running a large-scale policy project with an international team, there was a strong demand for short advice on day-to-day questions from this project (for example, whether the government should procure grains at a certain price within the next few hours). Government officials in Liberia and Lesotho and independent farmers associations in

⁴⁸ The ES Department indicated that they would be able to organize such reviews if funding was available, but in recent years, their effort has been on rebuilding FAO's leadership in global policy debates through focusing on excellent global policy work.

Benin wanted FAO to facilitate closer engagement for them in the policy formulation process. In Malawi, the national authorities were keen for FAO to provide them with support through staff or consultants to prepare policies and to provide the encouragement for adoption through creating awareness and high-level support. In Rwanda, the government also conveyed a demand for high-quality policy advice, but criticised some recent support provided, based on the experienced of rather mixed quality of policy work delivered by FAO consultants. On the other hand, interviewed government officials in South Sudan stressed the need for infrastructure and physical inputs rather than policy advice, and presented a long list of investment priorities that FAO should engage in, such as laboratories, extension centres, climate stations, etc. They were critical of any shift of emphasis to policy advice and rather wanted the “FAO we once knew” as an organization that, for example, built up the agricultural research system. In Kyrgyzstan, government officials expressed discontent that development agencies “always want us to change our laws” before investing in projects, which the government found to be of higher priority.

Box 3: Conflicting expectations regarding FAO's role in policy: The example of India

The India country study illustrates the dilemma faced by FAO caused by rather incompatible expectations of government and various stakeholders regarding FAO's role in policy.

Government: The interviewed representatives of various ministries and departments in charge of agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries and water and irrigation expressed rather different expectations regarding FAO's role. Some emphasized that policy-making is a sovereign task of each country, in which no international organization should be involved. Only technical advice would be acceptable. Others emphasized that FAO should mostly work at the regional level, since India had sufficient capacity to deal with its national policy issues. There was also the view that FAO should bring in global expertise on policy issues, at the same time FAO was criticized for not being able to bring in the best international experts on a specific topic. Asked to what extent FAO should engage with other stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector and the parliament, some respondents strongly felt that FAO should only engage with government--FAO should not play a visible role of its own, but rather be like “sugar in the tea.”

Civil society and the private sector: Interviewed representatives of both groups emphasized that FAO was open and accessible to them, and both groups had interesting examples of collaboration with FAO. At the same time, both groups emphasized that these cases of cooperation were limited and the outcome of coincidental interaction. They felt that FAO should do more to engage with them more frequently and on a more systematic basis.

Donor agencies: Some interviewees from this group felt that FAO did not play a sufficiently active role in coordinating the donors with a strategic view of engaging in policy dialogue with the government on important policy issues. Donors acknowledged the fact that the government trusted FAO. However, there were also instances where donors apparently wanted to make use of this trust to push policy issues that they found important, and they criticized FAO for not taking up this role.

Academia: Interviewees in this group recognized FAO's role in bringing in global experts on policy issues. At the same time there was criticism that the experts were either not cutting-edge or not sufficiently familiar with the Indian situation to be helpful.

187. It was also observed that the demand for policy work, e.g., the development of a particular strategy, was often created by donors rather than the government, since donors wanted such strategies as prerequisite for funding projects. This may help to explain the strong focus on producing certain policy documents as main policy activities indicated in Figure 11 above. FAO could then help governments in fulfilling this demand by fielding a consultant, but government buy-in in such arrangements seemed often doubtful and the actual policy impact of this type of policy work may be low. The demand for the national food security policies or strategies appeared to often come from FAO itself, and as further discussed below, initiatives to formulate these policies were also pursued in parallel with formulating general agricultural policies or strategies, creating considerable overlap.

188. As has been discussed above, under the new Country Programming approach, FAO should become more systematic in assessing country demand for policy support, as part of the process used to establish the new CPFs. (See also the 2010 Evaluation of FAO Country Programming). The extent to which this is effective depends on the ability of each FAO country office to make the CPF processes inclusive as possible,⁴⁹ and on the information made available for planning.⁵⁰ It also depends on how rigidly the CPFs will be adhered to in driving the FAO work in country. As discussed in the CP Evaluation, there will always be an issue regarding the extent to which FAO responds to ad-hoc country requests and to funding opportunities that arise outside the CPF. As mentioned above, the evaluation found that it is too early to assess the usefulness of the new CPF in ensuring effective response to needs (the new guidelines are only just being finalised), nor the extent to which country needs/requests will be for “project plums” rather than for consistent policy support. There is concern that the CPFs seen did not put enough emphasis on analysis in setting priorities for engagement. In addition, there seemed to be a reluctance to engage other stakeholders in the CPF process, particularly where these were not necessarily favoured by the government (see further discussion on stakeholder involvement below).

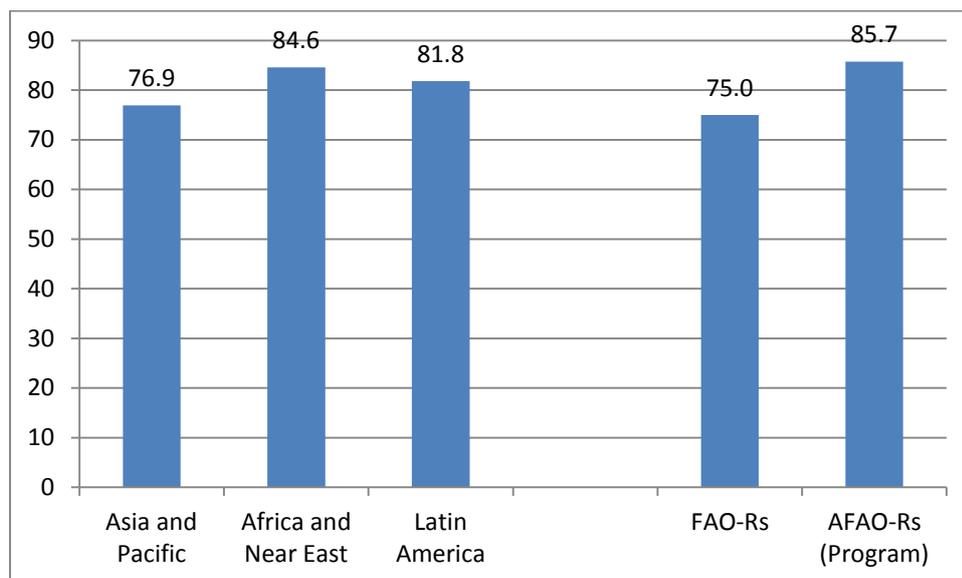
Limited policy support to FAO country offices

189. FAOREps need to rely on policy support and backstopping to effectively engage in policy dialogues and offer timely high quality advice. The country visits show that, except in cases where FAO has specific policy projects, this policy advice is typically not readily available to FAOREps and their country teams. As further discussed below, this is due to both limited capacity for policy advice as well lack of management procedures that would allow the Organization to use its scarce resources most effectively for policy advice. As shown in Figure 13, 75 percent of the FAOREps and more than 85 percent of the AFAOREps (Programme) felt that FAO should provide more backstopping on policy issues to them. In particular, FAOREps who have not worked in the Organization before (as indicated above, 70 percent of the FAOREps responding to the survey) have difficulties in getting information from HQ or decentralized offices, where they lack personal networks.

⁴⁹ E.g., if Fisheries is left out of the process, and in the still hypothetical situation that FAO becomes excessively rigid on requiring all projects to be within the CPF, this could be a problem. However, interviews with Fisheries in Thailand reflected the benefits of the process and showed that where these other Departments are included, it contributes both to more co-operation between sectors within the country and to a better understanding of the value of a more holistic approach for FAO and the country.

⁵⁰ This highlights the importance of knowledge management and of ensuring well informed participants so that they are able to articulate and prioritize concerns, taking into account experience in other countries and current global concerns.

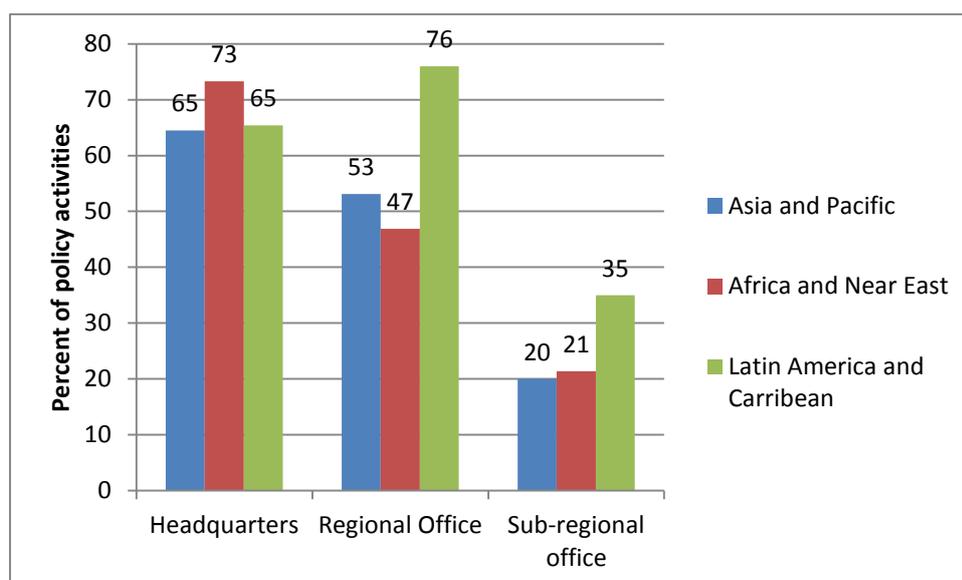
Figure 13: Percent of FAOREps and AFAOREps (Programme) who feel that FAO should provide more backstopping on policy issues to them



FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011

190. The respondents were then asked to whether they received policy support from Headquarters, Regional and Subregional Offices. The results are displayed in Figure 14. The figures show that only 20 percent of the policy activities in Africa rated to be the most important ones by the respondents received policy support from the subregional offices. In Latin America, the respective figure was 35 percent. One might explain this rather low figure with the concept that the policy officers at that level should only play a role as “first port of call.” However, the decentralization process certainly assigned a more important role for policy support to the subregional office by placing the policy officers at that level. It would not be a prudent use of resources to assign them only the task to “channel through” requests for assistance to higher levels.

Figure 14: Percent of important policy activities that receive support from Headquarters, Regional and Subregional Offices, by region



Note: Figures for Sub-regional Office refer to policy activities in the Pacific only, since there are no Sub-Regional Offices for Asia

Source: FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011

191. The evaluation found that in the regions and sub-regions the policy officers were expected to provide support to too many countries, and—as will be further discussed below—they were also called upon to devote time and resources to support priorities of senior management in the Region and at Headquarters in such a way that it was difficult to effectively plan their work programmes.⁵¹ The policy support provided to individual countries, appeared to depend more upon the effectiveness of their FAO Representative, his/her personal contacts to obtain in-House support and ability to raise, or tap into, extra-budgetary funds.
192. The evaluation found no consistent strategy for the way that field policy officers engage in regional institutions and country requests, nor identify the range of issues, nor prioritise their work programme. Decentralised policy officers seemed to view their role as primarily focused on food security issues and they did not see their role as being support to regional or sub-regional technical officers with analytical or other policy support. Although there is increasing rhetoric on team work in all offices, even where teams have been set up they tend to treat the work of policy officers as separate from that of technical officers.⁵²
193. At the same time, overall there did not seem to be evidence of strong support to field policy officers from HQ, with the engagement relying primarily on personal contacts, although this varied by Regional Office. The annual team-building and capacity development workshops held in Rome for decentralised policy officers provides some opportunity for expanding their network. With regard to policy support from HQ to the country offices, this depends to a great extent on the relevant personal network of HQ staff of the FAO Representative; where links with HQ are limited, support for policy work will be weak.

Limited training opportunities for FAOREps and Assistant FAOREps

194. Training can play an important role in increasing the capacity of FAOREps to provide policy assistance. TCSP has introduced a high-level training program for FAOREps and senior government members, which is certainly a very important initiative in this regard. However, the programme only reaches a limited number of FAOREps every year. Among the respondents of the survey, only 11 percent of the FAOREps and 21 percent of the AFAOREps indicated that they have received any training from FAO since they started their position. For those who received training (on the average 1.5 weeks), satisfaction rates were high. Still, considering that provision of training and coaching for senior management position is a common practice in private and, increasingly, also in public sector organizations, the lack of timely training for *all* new FAOREps and AFAOREps is certainly a matter of concern.

Challenge of dealing with sensitive policy issues

195. The close relation of FAO country offices to the ministries of agriculture seems to make it difficult for FAO to address issues that may be seen as sensitive to the government. Ministries of agriculture often have strong political incentives to pursue policies that are not necessarily pro-poor, such as distributing tractors in DRC or power tillers in Bangladesh or providing untargeted input subsidies in India. Information collected at country level suggests that country governments do not necessarily want FAO to take a position on such policies. Moreover, country governments do not like FAO to take sides with donor agencies on such topics. As noted above, one government official from an African country criticized the fact that the FAO

⁵¹ More systematic work planning is only recently being put in place and it is early to judge if it is helping policy officers prioritise and strategize more effectively. It should nonetheless help them move away from the 'jack-of-all-trades' role that they have had in the past, often co-opted to support changing priorities of senior management at HQ.

⁵² This is particularly evident in the structure of the teams in the Asia office.

representative asked critical questions about a government proposal in a donor coordination group meeting.

Difficulty to link up with the entire range of ministries that are relevant for food security and agricultural development

196. In many countries, the responsibilities for crop production, animal resources, nutrition, food security, food safety, fisheries, forestry, irrigation, agricultural trade and other topics under FAO's mandate are located in different ministries. While the evaluation found that FAO typically engages with this entire spectrum of ministries, there was criticism that FAO tended to concentrate on the ministry of agriculture. It remained unclear to what extent it was the host governments' own procedures as well as FAO's own procedures that constituted a barrier. Moreover, FAO seemed to have rather limited access to ministries in charge of finance, economics and planning, in spite of the important role that these ministries play for agricultural policy-making as part of general economic policy, including budget allocation to agriculture. The survey indicated that the ministry in charge of economic planning or finance was a main partner in less than five percent of the policy activities identified as important by the respondents. Moreover, the Natural Resources Management and Environment Department noted that FAOReps typically have difficulties to include land issues in Country Programming Frameworks because land tenure is dealt with by different ministry than the Ministry of Agriculture.

Challenges to influence the policy agenda through engaging with UN organizations

197. The problem of linking with other ministries than agriculture also had an impact at the intergovernmental level. For example, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA) was highly critical of NEPAD's policy goal of allocating 10% of its budget to agriculture, which they believe was promoted by FAO (though it was an AU declaration). UN-ECA feels that budget allocation is a prerogative of Ministers of Finance (who are convened by UN-ECA). According to them, the 10% goal did not recognize principles of budget allocation, and ignored the substantial analytical work that UN-ECA had conducted on such principles. UN-ECA felt that FAO could have avoided this problem through closer coordination. More generally, FAO might address its problem of engaging with other ministries than those of agriculture by engaging more strongly in the so-called Regional Coordination Mechanisms that involves the UN agencies and the Regional Economic Commissions.
198. At the country level, there is also a move towards joint programming of all UN agencies. The country visits indicate that FAO could promote its policy agenda by briefing the UN Resident Coordinator more intensively on agricultural policy issues and by working more closely with agencies whose mandate is related to that of FAO (e.g., WFP on food security, ILO on Rural Employment, UNDP on female empowerment, capacity development, UNDP and UNEP on environmental matters. So far, FAO seems to face challenges in this respect. For example, agriculture did not feature strongly in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2008-2012) for Rwanda in spite of the prominent role that agriculture needs to play for the development of this country. The capacity of the FAORep to engage in policy dialogues discussed above seems to be a constraint in this regard, as well.

Limitations in linking up with stakeholders outside governments

199. The country visits indicate that, in its policy work, FAO links up with a broad range of stakeholders, including NGOs and private sector organizations. In 97 percent of the policy initiatives identified as most important by the FAOReps and AFAOReps, consultations with stakeholders were part of the process. The number of consultations that were held in the process of developing the respective policies ranged from one to 80 (Figure 15). One can assume that a

considerable share of the budgetary resources indicated above was used to hold such consultations.

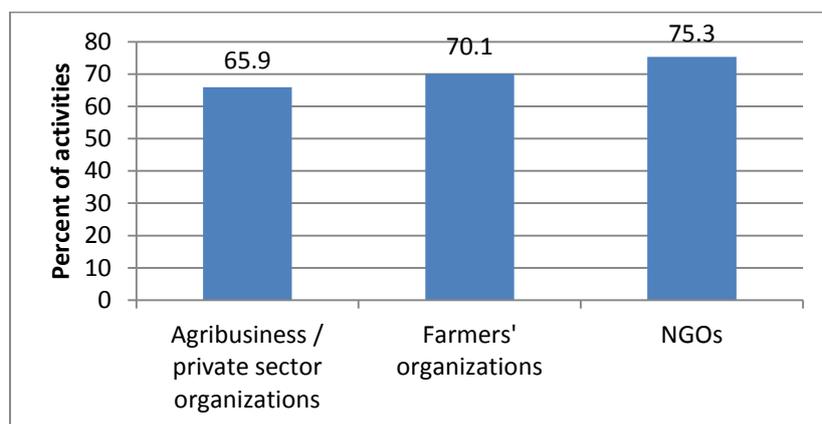
Figure 15: Number of stakeholder consultations held for activities identified as important

Type of activity	Mean	N	Min.	Max.
Sub-sectoral policy	11.2	27	1	80
General agricultural policy, including CAADP	10.1	17	1	30
Food security policy or strategy	13.9	22	1	80
Policy advice on current events	3.0	1	3	3
FAO document (NMTPF, CPF, etc.)	7.0	3	5	10
Other	18.0	3	2	30
Total	11.8	73	1	80

Source: FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011 and survey conducted during country visits

200. The survey indicated that organizations involving agribusiness or other private sector enterprises were involved in consultations held for almost two third of the policy initiatives. In case of farmers' organizations and NGOs, the percentage was even higher (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Type of stakeholders involved in consultations



Source: FAORep/AFAORep Survey, 2011 and survey conducted during country visits

201. In this sense, FAO can certainly take credit for promoting participatory policy-making, a point that was emphasized by government respondents during country visits. The evaluation of the Special Programme for Food Security had also identified the participatory approach as a strength of the programme.

202. However, one also has to take into account that there are limitations to the strategy to involve stakeholders mainly through workshops consultations on specific policy documents prepared by FAO or their consultants. Quite often, the role of the stakeholders is limited to commenting or “validating” a particular document. NGOs were also involved as partners in implementing FAO projects, but, as the case of Rwanda showed, this involvement did not necessarily translate into a recognition of those organizations as partners in policy processes. In the visited countries, FAO's engagement with national farmers' organizations beyond the “validation-workshop” type of interaction appeared to be rather low. For example, it does not seem customary for FAOREps to meet with representatives of national farmers' organizations on a regular basis to hear their views and concerns regarding agricultural policy. Some FAOREps made efforts to involve them (for example, one FAORep used personal funds to support a farmers' organization when they invited him to attend their meeting), but in other cases, governments discouraged this type of engagement as politically sensitive. The interaction of FAO with parliamentarians in charge of agriculture was generally low, as well, possibly due to similar reasons. Some

respondents were rather critical of the “validation-workshop-type” of engagement with stakeholders, and felt that this exercise was mostly carried out by consultants who held stakeholder consultations to “tick a box” when developing a policy or strategy.

203. As one interviewed former FAOREp observed, engaging with stakeholders outside government can also play an important role in promoting pro-poor agricultural policy change, even though this constitutes a “tricky balance” for FAO. As the interviewee pointed out: “Promoting such policy change has to be done through collaboration or coalitions with groups that have been working on the issue for a long time, know the history and the players very well. The partners may benefit from some added elements or value from FAO or another UN agency. It is only infrequently that a brand new issue arises that needs attention and there isn't a champion. Building and supporting the coalition, with government, civil society and the private sector is the key. This, in my experience, is almost invariably an evolutionary process. What looked possible earlier and failed, or could only go so far, becomes possible with a change in personnel or other policies or a crisis, etc. Analysing with partners and deciding which policy reforms to prioritise is necessary, ... and the FAO office needs to select issues in the CPFs, sometimes preparing the groundwork, sometimes pushing harder.” As indicated above, such a coalition-building does not seem a common practice or strength of FAOREps. One interviewed policy officer pointed to the administrative challenges involved: “More complex, process-oriented activities involving different stakeholders and quick reactions based on process situations are mostly a nightmare in terms of management in line with FAO rules and regulations that are mainly designed for producing technical papers and reduce risk of fraud.”

204. This evaluation suggests that a move towards an impact culture, which is highlighted in **Recommendation 3**, will create incentives for a more effective engagement with other UN agencies and stakeholders outside government and possibly also help to overcome the organizational challenges involved.

5.2 *Distribution of FAO's policy work within the policy daisy*

205. While the previous section of Chapter 5 discussed the findings of policy work at different levels (global, regional and local), this section takes the policy daisy described in Chapter 2 as a framework to present the findings regarding FAO's policy work in different phases of the policy cycle. This section uses examples to illustrate some of its more important findings. FAO is a diverse Organization and there are examples of support ranging from excellent to less than ideal for every stage. The evaluation has tried to identify where the weight of the evidence supports a general tendency.

5.2.1 *Policy Knowledge: Generation and Assembly*

206. This petal in the daisy is more commonly referred to as research, but it became obvious to the Team from interactions both in countries and regions and with international development specialists and agencies that what was uniquely important about FAO was its ability to harvest knowledge widely and then to make it available in ways that are more widely understood and relevant at country level. This role has become increasingly important with the explosion of information and more regional and national research bodies contributing to the knowledge. FAO, with its close links to governments and its position in the global landscape, has a comparative advantage both for gathering, filtering (*or: synthesizing*) and sharing this information.

207. In fact, FAO has always taken an important role in compiling and sharing the technical knowledge and data generated by governments, the CGIAR (which it supports as a Co-

Sponsor), universities and other institutions, and testing, packaging and distributing them in ways that are accessible and relevant to local conditions in client countries. FAO has had little involvement at the laboratory or primary research phase for technical fields and this evaluation found that FAO takes several different approaches to its roles with respect to policy research. The policy units in Forestry and Fisheries reported that they do not do upstream research, but are well linked to the research organizations and networks. In contrast, the livestock policy unit analysts emphasized the need to do research of its own because they feel what the research organizations provide is too patchy. ESA and EST are well set up to provide FAO with its own policy research capacity and it is their philosophy that FAO does need to be involved in some original policy research to retain credibility and leadership, and to be able to address emerging issues.

208. The evaluation found that, while there may sometimes be demand for FAO to engage in original research, for the most part FAO's role as honest knowledge broker is the more valued, particularly at regional and country levels. FAO does engage in some original research to fill gaps at the global level⁵³ and original research in partnership with other agencies is also carried out at the national or regional level (e.g., on seed policy with IFPRI) but the main demand is for FAO to focus on policy experience and knowledge assembly and dissemination. As has been indicated above and will be further discussed below, there is, however, a need for more analytical work at the country level.

209. The evaluation observed that there is some excellent regional knowledge-assembly work⁵⁴ but knowledge communication is less effective. Policy-makers in countries as diverse as Myanmar, Colombia and Benin stressed the importance of being kept up to date with international research and especially in sharing the experiences of other countries. The evaluation found that in many field interviews the emphasis was on statistics and the usefulness of FAOSTAT⁵⁵ as a source of information to assist in whatever policy analysis is done, as well as on the flagship products such as *The State of Food and Agriculture* (SOFA), *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* (SOFI), the *Forest Resources Assessment* for Forestry and *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* (SOFIA) for Fisheries. The government staff in ministries visited asked for more information on Climate Change but only a few interviewed with particular interest and expertise in this area regularly used the relevant FAO websites.

210. In Forestry, there are good examples of FAO support to providing regional knowledge and analysis (see many excellent Forestry publications for Asia listed in the references) and opportunities to share experiences and to develop regional positions.⁵⁶ In Africa, an FAO regional forestry journal published by the Regional Office is providing opportunities for African academics to publish and for sharing experiences but needs more animation to take a leading role in assembling and disseminating research in the region.⁵⁷

⁵³ For example, the work on livestock and climate change, where it has done some sophisticated modelling to fill a gap, reported in the SOFA 2009. There were two arguments made for FAO to be engaged in original research: (1) there are topics too important to leave to only one organization and one modelling team (such as IFPRI), and (2) FAO can draw on its entire range of technical knowledge in agriculture and rural development to inform its work.

⁵⁴ E.g., many of the RAP Forestry publications, including the book on Growing Green Assets (Pescott, Durst and Leslie 2010).

⁵⁵ E.g., the Deputy Director of NAPC, Syria frequently consults data on FAOSTAT. He is particularly interested in publications on drought and soaring food price. The centre also uses materials developed by EasyPOL for training activities on value-chain analysis and finds them very useful.

⁵⁶ The evaluation was told that some countries in Asia do not like confrontational open global meetings – they prefer to prepare well and have positions negotiated already, and FAO has a role to facilitate this process, especially bringing weaker countries to participate on more equal terms.

⁵⁷ E.g.: "Natural resource tenure systems and their implications for agriculture, food security and nature conservation in Africa" *Nature and Faune*, Vol. 24, Issue 2 FAO Regional Office for Africa).

211. The Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA) leads in producing much of the global normative policy knowledge.⁵⁸ The Policy Assistance Support Service (TCSP) is mandated to support policy officers in regional, sub-regional and national offices to provide policy advice, strengthen policy institutions, and enhancing dialogue and knowledge exchange. This Service produces general policy documents, training materials, thematic policy studies and organizes seminars, workshops and courses. TCSP also runs the “EASYPol” website that is used for training and contains a large body of information.
212. It should be recognized, however, that much of the work produced by these units is in response to demands from senior management or donors, and it was found that both FAO field staff and Member Countries find that some of the work is too “theoretical”.⁵⁹ Furthermore, it was reported by some that, while the work is often reactive to particular circumstances, the publication of the information comes too late. On the other hand, important information and publications often do not reach countries without long delays even when produced on time. This is highlighted with the “Guide to Policy and Programming actions at country level to address High Food Prices”. This valuable document was first published in 2008. A second version was published in 2010 and included updates based on experience gained since then. Still, FAO Country staff asked about the document did not seem to know of it, perhaps reflecting the limited availability of relevant staff members at the time of the country visits.
213. TCSP has been active in providing support to its policy officers on facilitating policy processes and a series of publications is available to assist in facilitation.⁶⁰ However, FAO officers from other divisions both in HQ and in the field are actively engaged in influencing policy and they do not seem to be a focus of TCSP for uptake of their policy-process CD materials. Until the policy role of technical officers discussed above is more clearly articulated and more broadly accepted, there will be limited exposure to the capacity to carry this out effectively.
214. The level of engagement in knowledge production for policy differs between the regions and between sub-regions. All the Regional and Sub-regional Offices indicated that they would like to be more engaged in producing policy-relevant knowledge products. However, as indicated above, in all the offices, the policy officers were responsible for so many countries that they were unable to respond to all requests for support from those countries. Furthermore, the Terms of Reference of most Regional and Sub-regional policy officers include tasks relating to management of the field programme,⁶¹ which leave them with little time to work with technical officers, or HQ analytical units to produce policy-relevant knowledge products.
215. Of particular concern to the evaluation is the relatively poor uptake of knowledge products which was evident in the field and which has been noted in past evaluations as well. The questionnaire sent to senior ministry officials asked the respondents to indicate “the five most important FAO publications that you have used for your policy work within the past five years.” The respondents mostly named FAO’s flagship publications (SOFA and other “State of”

⁵⁸ Some important research contributions made by ESA include issues such as: *Price Volatility in Agricultural Markets* (2010); *Rising Food Prices and Undernourishment. A Cross-Country Inquiry* (2009); *A Profile of the Rural Poor* (2009) *From Land Grab to Win-Win* (2009), etc. Also, methodological contributions as: *Agricultural Policy Impact Analysis with Multi-Market Models: A Primer* (2008); *A conceptual framework for national agricultural, rural development, and food security strategies and policies* (2008) *A Model of Vulnerability to Food Insecurity* (2009) among others.

⁵⁹ Publications from ES and even some from TCA were considered to be too theoretical and not relevant to the situations faced. They wanted to better understand these issues with respect to their own realities rather than in abstract models.

⁶⁰ Materne Maetz and Jean Balie *Influencing Policy Processes* FAO 2008 is one of the core references.

⁶¹ E.g., one policy officer in SFS is required to stand in as the FAOREp for Swaziland.

reports, while other more specific publications on policy issues were hardly mentioned at all. Thus while FAO does appear to be making a real contribution in its role of harvesting and adapting available policy-relevant knowledge, there did not appear to be the necessary emphasis on knowledge sharing and communication. However, more recently FAO is engaging in some innovative ways to address this problem. The e-policy fora which are providing broad debate and inputs to global policy formulation as well as FAO's significant contribution to e-learning platforms are being used to good effect. There reach is still limited and this evaluation observed that more effort needs to be made by all divisions to use current technology to clearly target audiences and ensure more direct lines of knowledge sharing.

5.2.2 Policy Analysis

216. This petal is often considered the core of policy support and is intimately associated with the research and knowledge function. Whereas the ES Department (ESA, EST, ESW) largely carries out analysis of global policy issues, much of the policy assistance work in countries, as evidenced in the policy support documentation and the policy documents, appears to be prescriptive rather than analytical or evidence-based (see section on country-level policy work above), although there are important exceptions, such as the ESA in-country work on the food security project in Bangladesh. TCSP does produce policy analysis tools and capacity development but the uptake of these within FAO appears to be limited. As has been pointed out above, the evaluation found that in many instances, at the country level, policy analysis is a weak aspect of FAO work; there is too much rhetoric and not enough evidence and analysis. At global level, this is much less the case and here there is some excellent work done for the flagship 'State of the World' publications such as SOFA, SOFI, etc. Also work done with some applied field research and analysis on specific policies is worthy of special mention.⁶² Still, the analysis of ESA publications (see Annex 6) indicates that the Division could be more strategic in focusing its country-level work on topics that address knowledge gaps in FAO's core mandate areas and that can be used to better inform country policy assistance.
217. In order to promote and support agricultural development there is evident need for policy in many fields in which there is a substantive technical base. In all cases, there are socio-economic implications of any resulting policy measures. This requires analysing information on the cost and benefit (financial, social, environmental and political) of a measure to solve a problem, as well as addressing the complexities in policy implementation. As has been mentioned above, what is missing from much of FAO's explicit 'policy assistance' is the analytical work and evidence to back the policies formulated. This was evident in much of the food security, nutrition and agricultural sector policy support that FAO is providing.⁶³ However, it was even more evident that there is a lack of analysis of socio-economic impacts of policies and laws emerging from 'technically driven' assistance, for example forest fire management, integrated pest management, conservation agriculture etc.
218. This aspect – the economic and social implications and in particular the impact pathways - is missing in most FAO technical assistance and even much of the policy work. It is sometimes

⁶² Good analytical work done on seeds in association with IFPRI and other CGIAR Centers on Bioenergy in association with IFPRI and on Payment for Environmental Services with WWF and CARE provide a few examples which used country case studies. Globally there was also some excellent social analysis accompanying the work which led to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and FAO policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. FAO is also at the forefront of innovative research modelling animal production impact on climate change. References: book by Lipper et al. on seeds; Thofern *et al* BEFS series for Bioenergy, Branca et al in *Journal of Environment & Development* 20(10), 2011 for PES, Steinfeld *et al*, *Livestock's Long Shadow*.

⁶³ Nutrition policy Lesotho, Malawi; forest policy Liberia; land policy Benin.

found in normative publications but appears to be missing in most country work.⁶⁴ There is more of this type of analysis in the policy support work of the Investment Centre (TCI), but no effort appears to have been made to institutionalize these skills within the rest of FAO or in the client institutions in the Member Countries.

219. What the Team found in countries visited is that for most issues confronting them, there is a range of policies that could be adopted, and the particular need is to clearly articulate the ramifications of different policy options and measures.⁶⁵ FAO global normative work, e.g., on the impacts of climate change and weather instability, needs to be further developed to better handle uncertainty (e.g., Antle 2008, and see para 267 below) and eventually translated into tools that allow countries to examine alternative policy scenarios for following different paths. It is increasingly important for countries to be able to define policies and related investments under conditions of uncertainty, and to be able to outline impact pathways and thus just which groups are going to be impacted and how strongly they will be affected.
220. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia noted that demand for analytical support is high in that region, with demand for good policy analysis having become significant in the past few years. The countries have also recognised the importance of involving a broader range of stakeholders, though FAO's role in this facilitation has been limited mainly to assistance with EU accession and conforming to EU policies.
221. Many developing and even middle-income countries, particularly in Africa, Eastern Europe, Central and South Asia and the Pacific need to develop analytical skills, and strong institutions that can do effective policy analysis and advise governments on their agricultural policies, and on other policies that affect agriculture. Even important sector policies are frequently neglected because of inadequate institutional capacity for policy analysis and formulation.
222. Policy analysis of issues in one region may well be relevant in other regions but it is not always effective to use these examples, particularly where the protagonists are unable to identify closely. FAO may need to take that analysis and find examples from the local country or region to illustrate.⁶⁶
223. **The Example of Biotechnology:** Many countries do not have a clear biotechnology policy, and FAO is trying to help them build capacity but the evaluation did not see evidence of economic or social analysis as a consistent part of this policy support. FAO has been quite successful in supporting countries to establish food and agricultural safety policies and regulatory authorities, but again, seldom are the economic and social impacts of these policies and regulations made explicit. The institutions that FAO is assisting countries to establish with

⁶⁴ E.g., missing in nutrition policy in Malawi and Lesotho and very limited in the food security and agricultural sectoral policy work carried out in the past in Lesotho. The Lesotho government (Ministry of Finance) identified a strong need for these analytical skills to be developed in the Ministry of Agriculture. Earlier evaluations did show systematic analysis of policies to have been deliberately addressed in Burkina Faso but it is not clear if this has been sustained. The Institute in Syria was developed by FAO to provide such support, but the evaluation found their focus to be more on providing consulting services with few government agencies relying on them for policy assistance.

⁶⁵ Price instability in LAC was highlighted, as were the options for dairy expansion and pig meat safety in Myanmar, the need for more analytical evidence to support adoption of nutrition policy in Lesotho and the importance of providing impact pathways for different land size options in Benin (brought up by the farmers' association, concerned about government bringing in foreigners and emphasizing large-scale production).

⁶⁶ E.g., using experience in Uganda on gender was considered irrelevant when proposing gender policies in Eastern Europe. Similarly using tree conservation examples from tropical Central America was considered irrelevant to mountainous, dry Lesotho residents. While the principles were the same, the people were unable to identify sufficiently and needed the principles more clearly articulated using what are seen as locally relevant examples.

respect to food safety (e.g., in Lesotho) are focusing on technical and administrative factors and there is little evidence of an economic analysis of different approaches to ensuring food safety. This analysis could help understand the integrity of agriculture, and assess biotechnology options in countries. Even the FAO Statement on Biotechnology on its website emphasizes only the biological, production, environmental and medical aspects of GMO and other technology. In contrast the more recent work on country bio-energy policy support does include thorough analysis of economic implications.⁶⁷

224. While the economic analysis in the ongoing country engagement was typically unclear, over the evaluation period, two efforts stand out as highly significant in this regard. The first, the assembly of the information reported in the 2003-04 SOFA on Biotechnology represented a major knowledge-management achievement. Cogent experiences in the developing world (and elsewhere) were analysed by a world-class team, and presented in an impressively accessible format. The economic and social analyses were at the cutting edge, and the opportunities and options for nations to forge relevant policy in this domain were well charted. The report clarified the need for countries (a) to embed biotechnology in their national research and development institutions (including the private elements) and (b) to elaborate a responsible regulatory framework for biotechnology innovations to be safely handled and advanced, and thus ultimately exploited for the benefit of the national agricultural sector.

225. Second, the International Technical Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries, convened by FAO in Guadalajara, Mexico in March 2010, was an excellent if rather belated and quite different follow-up achievement.⁶⁸ The Conference was attended by about 300 participants from 68 countries, representing governments, UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations, CGIAR institutes, civil society organizations and INGOs. The Conference was reported by participants met by the evaluation to have been highly successful in drawing attention to the issues around biotechnologies and putting different analyses and viewpoints on the table for discussion.

5.2.3 Policy formulation, negotiation, and adoption

226. This series of petals in the Daisy relates to those issues where it is primarily the role of individual governments to take decisions and make the necessary investments, using the knowledge, advice, analysis and capacity development that FAO and others may make available to them. It is, however, also an area in which FAO can play an important catalytic role and one which FAO is increasingly called upon to contribute to.⁶⁹

227. FAO has a comparative advantage in facilitating dialogue within countries between different sectors and stakeholders, between governments in a region, as well as between governments and development partners within the country and internationally. As has been highlighted above, it brings its reputation as an honest broker to the table, reinforcing the importance of its capacity to provide neutral analysis of policy options taking into account, technical, environmental, economic and social implications.

⁶⁷ With Thailand, Tanzania and Peru as case-studies using the analytical framework. The BEFS Analytical Framework, Env. and NR Management WP 16, FAO, Rome 2010.

⁶⁸ Captured and readily available to all policy makers as ABDC2010: "Agricultural biotechnologies in developing countries: Options and opportunities in crops, forestry, livestock, fisheries and agro-industry to face the challenges of food insecurity and climate change (ABDC-10)".

⁶⁹ Both in countries and international agencies wanted to see FAO assist countries to ensure that policies did not "remain on the shelf".

228. Within countries visited, FAO was often identified as able to put forward international norms and emerging issues with more authority than, say, technocrats in the Ministry of Agriculture. This comes from the recognised expertise in most fields, the high international standing and in the widely perceived ability to be seen as an external arbiter outside of local influence. Many policies, which local technocrats support, may not be politically easy for them to promote, and FAO has an important facilitating role in such circumstances. This was seen as an important strength in Lesotho and Benin, but less so in Liberia, where there are many very active international donors, with more financial clout to support their interests. In Myanmar, FAO's ability to support more participative processes and empowerment was particularly welcome by fishery officials in government, and it appeared that greater engagement for the University and research in general would be welcome. Even in middle-income countries, such as Colombia or Turkey, FAO is asked to play this role, providing advice and implementing activities with national funding (Unilateral Trust Funds) but outside of the politics of government. FAO is also in a position, through its convening power, to bring together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss issues related to policy formulation and adoption. However, as has been discussed above, a more strategic involvement with stakeholders beyond the holding of workshops seems justified, especially with regard to achieving policy impact.
229. **Producing a policy document vs. facilitating a process:** A feature frequently noted by the evaluation is that, when FAO is directly involved in country policy formulation, this usually takes the form of hiring national or international consultants to produce a policy document. The evaluation found this approach to policy formulation to be one of the critical weaknesses of policy support, along with poor dissemination and uptake of knowledge. As already indicated above, while generous use is made of such terms as "government/stakeholder buy-in," "national ownership," "country-led," etc., the actual work of preparing the policy paper falls on the outside experts. The consultants are normally expected to consult widely, but their ToRs generally do not stress capacity development as a primary output, nor require the institution being supported to produce the policy itself. This is probably not possible in cases with extreme skill shortages, such as Liberia, but even there it would be useful if more responsibility for formulation of policy was given to the relevant state institution. This tendency to carry out, or get consultants to carry out, the formulation is not unique to FAO, but rather the 'usual' way that development partners support policy making. The future need not be like the past and the evaluation has suggestions in Chapter 7 for possible change in this domain.
230. **Creating "soft" skills for negotiation:** In an initiative dating back to 2003, FAO engaged in developing negotiation skills and capacities in member countries, particularly on policy. The project developed training material and conducted capacity building workshops in several countries. The same project (see www.fao.org/tc/negotiation) also contributed to strengthening negotiation skills of FAO staff and therefore contributed to balancing technical and soft skills in order to increase policy assistance effectiveness. The project also contributed to develop an approach to capacity development on negotiations that are of broader relevance as well as the production of technical and analytical documents. The aim was to promote a medium-to-long term approach based on facilitated processes to strengthen individual and institutional skills and capacities to engage more effectively in negotiations particularly at regional levels (ECOWAS, UEMOA, COMESA, SADC, etc.). However, FAO faced problems in sustaining this initiative.
231. **Neutral convenor:** As has been discussed above, one aspect of FAO policy support that was widely appreciated is its emphasis on engaging with a broader spectrum of stakeholders during formulation. The Forestry and also the Fisheries ministries in Thailand indicated that this had strengthened their ability to bring stakeholder perspectives into policy making. In DR Congo, FAO was recognised as the agency that was able to bring not only civil society organisations but also the local private-sector organizations to the table.
232. However, the record on FAO ensuring this participation is patchy. In most countries, FAO historically considers its key client to be the Ministry of Agriculture, and that work with other

ministries and stakeholders constitutes a spillover benefit befitting an effective international organization, and not the primary focus of FAO as an agency.⁷⁰ In yet other cases the government does not want FAO to engage directly with other stakeholders.

233. In Benin, the main Federation of farmers' organizations felt that FAO gave too much emphasis to the views of government and parastatal associations, and did not adequately defend the Federation's point of view on controversial issues. They stressed that there needs to be more engagement with farmers and other local stakeholders. In Lesotho, FAO has been proactive and assisting with the establishment of an umbrella organization for farmers, and they requested that FAO ensure that they are more closely brought into policy dialogue to help them become a centre for FAO knowledge dissemination. In Liberia the nascent farmers' organizations felt that FAO could do more to bring them into the policy discourse. All of these cases, while pointing to farmer requests for greater FAO support, also underline the close relationship they have in each of these cases with the local FAO office. In Myanmar, where all FAO contacts are, of course, presently with the government, given the recent political changes, it will be important for FAO to assist in bringing farmers and civil society into the policy dialogue. FAO is probably the best placed agency to do this, provided it is able to (re-)establish its credibility with other development partners. In middle-income countries such as Thailand, the farmers and civil society organizations are politically stronger, so their requirements are more for developing analytical capacity and access to information.

234. **The case of climate change policy:** One area in which all countries seemed to require assistance with formulation, negotiation, adoption and investment is work on policies related to Climate Change. Even in middle-income countries such as Thailand and Colombia, the various ministries wanted to receive more support in linking into international protocols on climate change. Although FAO has been active at the global level (see Box 2 on Climate Change work) much more work is called for, not only on providing knowledge and analysis of options,⁷¹ but also in assisting them to develop policies that will enable them to take advantage of opportunities for adaptation and mitigation. There have been some countries where FAO has actively provided such support and there are Headquarters initiatives with case-study countries that are developing evidence for such policies. Assistance to countries in formulating, negotiating, adopting and establishing the necessary investment to operationalize climate change policies is high on the agenda of most countries. The evaluation found that most FAO officers in the field, and even some in Headquarters, were not yet comfortable in taking on this role. This is an area in which there are sources of extra-budgetary funding available and FAO needs to assist countries to better access these resources. The evaluation found that other international agencies are taking the lead in some areas where they had expected FAO to have the comparative advantage.⁷² Having said this, there are some countries where FAO is assisting in the formulation of policies and strategies to adapt to climate change, e.g., Syria where the FAO Rep was working with Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR) to assist it in drafting a second, more refined strategy on climate change.

⁷⁰ The evaluation Team heard this in Benin and Myanmar, with some of the interlocutors at Regional Offices and HQ.

⁷¹ In particular, FAO work thus far has not yet adequately handled the many large and intrinsic uncertainties pertaining to climate change (e.g., Weitzman 2011, Quiggin 2012), presumably because of shortage of specialized staff skills in such uncertainty analysis, a topic taken up in Recommendation 4 (chapter 7).

⁷² One example is UNREDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) where FAO role is primarily technically supporting "measuring, reporting and verification" (MRV) processes, concentrating on methods to measure and assess terrestrial carbon stocks and carbon stock changes and appears to be little involved in developing national policies for adaptation, mitigation and access to UNREDD+.

235. **Platform role:** As indicated above the evaluation found that FAO is active in playing its role as honest broker at both the global and national level, and increasingly at regional level.⁷³ Many of the partners interviewed at country level indicated that they would like to see FAO play a bigger role, but that they were very under-resourced.⁷⁴ However, the evaluation found that this role is not well rewarded within FAO - little allowance is made for the time it takes - and that it may become increasingly marginalized by the results-based management system, unless these roles are more clearly articulated, and time and resources allocated towards facilitation. Policy is a process and a key component of that process is raising the profile of policy issues to get buy-in, facilitating dialogue between different stakeholders nationally,⁷⁵ between government agencies within countries and between countries. In some countries FAO also provides a platform for development agencies and government⁷⁶, whereas in others FAO is more marginal. The evaluation found that in most places FAO is not engaged as much as both bilateral agencies and governments would like it to be. This is often the result of both human capacity and resources (as discussed in Chapter 4).

236. While FAO's role in the adoption of policies is limited, as indicated earlier, sometimes FAO can play an important role in facilitating engagement between stakeholders so that policy options can be discussed, and assist in providing the information and the legitimacy for the importance of policies to be taken into consideration.⁷⁷ The response from the interviews in the field and at Headquarters indicated the key position of the FAO in providing a platform, facilitating projects and policies, and FAO's reputation and credibility. As indicated in **Recommendation 3**, more emphasis could be played, however, on the impact of the policy work. At the country level, the FAOREp needs to play a key role in this regard. In some countries with a large emergency programme, this platform facilitation role is played by the FAO Emergency Co-ordinator, facilitating and co-ordinating emergency efforts, and the programme and reputation of FAO and its central role as facilitator is widely recognised. In line with the recommendations of the 2010 Country Programming Evaluation, this evaluation noted that as it is being put into place, the CPF should be used to much greater effect as a tool in providing a platform for policy dialogue and for providing information that can inform the government in determining priorities.

5.2.4 Linking policies to investment

237. This petal of the daisy acknowledges that, except for some policy changes such as abolishing subsidies or changing tariffs, implementing policies usually requires public investments that rely on decisions from Ministers of Economics and Finance, even for those investments to be made with donor resources. These decisions are most often based on anticipated financial and social returns and potential multiplier effects. In addition the budget decisions are often the

⁷³ E.g., in South Asia Fisheries (mentioned by India) and avian flu mediation, including also the Subregional level such as SAP.

⁷⁴ This was said in most of the countries visited and particularly in Lesotho, Liberia and Thailand.

⁷⁵ Fisheries in Thailand appreciated the opportunity to engage closely with the other relevant ministries through the CPF process; BEFS policy analysis work in Thailand brings together a range of Ministries and the University with the Ministry of Agriculture; the CD evaluation noted some interesting examples where capacity development provides a platform for close collaboration between ministries in Burkina Faso, the FNPP evaluation on food security policy formulation in Zanzibar, which closely involved several Ministries and local authorities to share ideas.

⁷⁶ FAO is active in providing a platform for exchange in Zimbabwe through the Agriculture Coordination Working Group (ACWG) and is well recognised by international agencies and national stakeholders for this role. However, the evaluation did not find it providing a broad platform for engagement in any of the case study countries visited.

⁷⁷ FAO has had an important role in raising the profile of gender and indigenous people in tenure and access to resources, although some felt it could do more.

outcome of politics and other factors affecting these decisions. This means that if policies are to be given the resources required for effective implementation, they require explicit analysis of the financial and social costs and benefits, and ideally also an analysis of alternative options. Except for the work conducted in the Investment Center (TCI), this type of analysis was remarkably absent in almost all the policy documents the evaluation saw. Even for policy documents that included budget figures, such as the national food security strategies, these figures did not seem to be based on such an analysis. This could well be one reason why FAO does not always appear to have much success in moving the agricultural agenda forward, or in convincing Ministries of Finance and donors to actually fund such plans, as has been discussed above. Thus, there is often limited success in getting traction even for policies which may be formally adopted.

238. FAO showed the capacity to make technical and economic issues explicit in some Subregional Offices but, for the most part, it is only with work by the Investment Centre (TCI) that there is analysis of the expected return on investment in a new policy or policy change, and seldom even on projects. For the most part the evaluation found insufficient interaction between policies, investment and technical knowledge.

239. The Investment Centre (TCI) is well recognized for its contractual work with international financial institutions (IFIs), as was positively commented on to the evaluation by interviewed World Bank staff, for instance. Due to demands of IFI clients, TCI does, of course, articulate the links between policy and investment. TCI has played an important (some TCI staff felt sometimes even excessive) role in making the investment plans, such as those related to CAADP, which allowed countries to access GAFSP Funding – good examples were seen in Rwanda and Bangladesh. However, as has been mentioned above, TCI often draws expertise external to FAO, even for technical areas within FAO's competence, thus reducing the cross-fertilisation of ideas and shared learning within the Organization narrowly defined. A practical problem is that TCI cannot easily draw on expertise within the Organization because they often need short-term work on very short notice– which the technical divisions are not able or willing to provide. Under pressure following the IEE, there has been some increase, in particular with the newly decentralised Investment Officers in the Regional and Subregional Offices, but the evaluation found that links between TCI and other units in the Regions and at Headquarters continue to be relatively weak (as further discussed in Chapter 6).

240. Donors are increasingly unlikely to fund projects and programmes that are not supported by clear impact pathways and demonstrate economic and social viability and, governments are calling for more evidence to support policy adoption.⁷⁸ FAO is having to adapt, as have others, to the more results-based requirements for funding of development interventions.

5.2.5 Policy implementation

241. This petal of the daisy is the essential, but often weak link for achieving policy impact. There were calls in most of the countries visited for FAO to get more involved in the implementation of the policies that they have supported. However, engaging directly into implementation is to a large extent outside FAO's mandate and beyond its financial resources. Where FAO could play an important role, however, is helping countries to address the governance problems that are often the biggest bottleneck to policy implementation, next to allocating sufficient resources (covered the previous petal). Such governance challenges include “leakage” and procurement problems, targeting challenges and elite capture, and human resource management problems

⁷⁸ E.g., in Lesotho it was made clear that more evidence was required for the nutrition policy, and the Ministry of Finance called for more support to Ministry of Agriculture staff in order to ensure that the policies that the latter put forward have a sounder economic basis.

such as absenteeism of staff.⁷⁹ The evaluation noted some remarkable efforts in the Plant Production and Protection Division to engage in governance issues and provide training to Member countries in this respect. Likewise, the voluntary global instruments on fisheries, forestry and land tenure address governance issues. Otherwise, however, the evaluation observed a lack of attention of FAO to this, obviously rather sensitive but important, issue. The evaluation noted that, instead, FAO is implementing a lot of field projects (see the Rwanda example detailed above), which one could also argue is equally outside its mandate, yet FAO conducts those projects because of provided funding for it or because countries demand it. Thus, one could make a case here for linking project work more systematically with support to policy implementation. This could imply to systematically use such projects to help governments identify and overcome the governance challenges involved in project implementation.

242. As noted in other contexts noted in this chapter, the evaluation felt that FAO is not giving the required priority to *capacity development for policy*, in this case to ensure that policies are implemented. The evaluation found that, while there are numerous small capacity-development initiatives, it is not yet part of the culture of the Organization to ensure that all projects are approached in a way that will build capacity.⁸⁰ There did not appear to be sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure that consultants working on FAO projects and TCPs are linked into the relevant technical divisions at sub-regional, regional or HQ level. They were also only occasionally specifically directed to the FAO knowledge base. There are also limited incentives for technical officers to reach out and engage in the case of country-led activities, thus limiting the mutual learning and reducing opportunities for developing the capacity of national institutions for both formulating and implementing policies.

5.2.6 Policy evaluation and impact assessment

243. Policy evaluation and impact assessment are almost entirely missing from FAO policy work at all levels. There are a few nascent steps towards taking this on board through various monitoring systems further discussed in Chapter 6, but they focus more on documenting/monitoring policy adoption rather than conducting a thorough assessment of the economic and social impact of adopting and implementing policies. An “impact culture” has yet to permeate the Organization. Accordingly, the evaluation explores the topic in Chapter 6. **Recommendation 3** focuses on mainstreaming impact assessment in FAO.

5.2.7 Institutional strengthening, including capacity development

244. This is an important cross-cutting element of the policy daisy. FAO provides significant contributions for the improvement of capabilities of individuals at national partner organizations through training materials and training events on different aspects of policy matters and the different stages of the policy cycle. EASYPol is one instrument for this purpose. Valuable publications, courses, workshops, etc. have been given at all four levels: HQ, Regional, Sub-regional and national. However, as clearly articulated in the Evaluation of FAO's Capacity Development activities in Africa and in FAO's own corporate strategy on capacity development, strengthening institutional capacity requires much more than training staff. It also needs to address organizational capacity and the enabling environment. Thus, it implies organization; developing a work agenda, setting priorities, developing abilities to perform properly at all levels of the policy cycle, gaining prestige and recognition, and especially

⁷⁹ See, for example, Birner, R., Quisumbing, A., and Ahmed, N. (2012), online at <http://bids.org.bd/ifpri/cross-cutting2.pdf>, which discusses the governance problems involved in the food security action plan of Bangladesh.

⁸⁰ This will take more time and resources but is the only sustainable way to deliver assistance.

assuring funding and a funding strategy. All this, in turn, requires investing for sustainable institutional capacity development. The effort of current FAO capacity development work towards this goal is quite limited. In fact, this is not only an issue at FAO but for many international organizations, where developing institutional capacity has not been mastered as part of their strategy or has dropped too low on their agenda over the years. An important but frequently missing part, for example, is the indicators of sustainable institutional capacity.

245. Capacity development of individuals will only contribute to sustainable impact if there are institutions that can provide continuity and a framework for ensuring critical mass to be effective not only at analysing policy options and drafting documents, but most importantly in being able to raise the awareness needed for effective adoption and implementation. FAO has a mixed history with institution building. The evaluation found that there may be too much emphasis on building new agencies per se, rather than in facilitating effective policy analysis, formulation and adoption, that bring together the range of government departments and outside stakeholders.⁸¹
246. FAO has been and is still active in supporting capacity development through specific policy projects, as noted above and they have also established or help establishing policy-focused units within Ministries of Agriculture.⁸² However, as the experiences in Syria, Bangladesh and Burkina Faso⁸³ show, it is not the size of the investment as much as establishing the unit with linkages both upwards into those departments that decide on adoption and financing, as well as with a broad range of stakeholders, that is the key to success. It is also necessary to establish an ongoing capacity development and information exchange mechanism to ensure that they remain motivated and up to date. Establishing incentives to retain highly qualified staff is a major challenge, as well, as the case of Syria showed.⁸⁴
247. As the Burkina Faso example showed, there can be much success in developing capacity by using the relevant government staff directly in the projects to carry out the analysis, facilitate the process and write the analysis with FAO providing knowledge, skills, mentoring and, initially, oversight. One innovative approach to achieving this, currently being undertaken by FAO, is the "Monitoring African Food and Agricultural Policies" project (MAFAP), which is a systematic approach to providing member governments with policy support, establishing a methodology for policy measurement and evaluation, integrating information gathering and data and policy options analysis into the national policy-making architecture. It has been designed in a way that will build local institutional and individual capacity, while at the same time drawing on expertise and counsel from partners throughout the world. The MAFAP project is just beginning country activities as this report is being prepared, so the evaluation was not able to

⁸¹ The FAO-supported National Agricultural Policy Centre (NAPC) in Syria was a stark example of how significant investment could become redundant when the organization has weak contacts with universities and civil society and where, even within government, it is seen as the arm of one Department rather than the independent advisory body it was meant to be. Even in that department they did not seem to always rely on NAPC in formulating policies. To the evaluation, NAPC appeared as a semi-functioning consultancy with some strong government ties.

⁸² E.g., In the specific field of trade negotiations and food security, FAO made a most valuable contribution worldwide, which included training of national staff and the design of the responsible Units at Ministries of Agriculture (earlier evaluations have cited examples in Kenya, Mozambique, Zanzibar, Nicaragua, Burkina Faso). Other experiences in capacity development have not prospered as much as in the case of the Planning and Investment Departments of Ministries of Agriculture, an initiative tried in Latin America.

⁸³ A small highly trained unit within the statistics division of the Ministry of Agriculture was linked to the Finance ministry in carrying out sophisticated analysis and then they were also linked to a wide range of other departments, farmers and civil society in the process of carrying out more simple value chain analysis and sharing findings (*source PCA Norway evaluation*).

⁸⁴ At the time of the visit by the evaluation Team, the National Agricultural Policy Center (NAPC) had only one PhD level staff left, and even he had recently been drafted into the Army.

assess the programme, but the approach does appear to meet the goals of improving policy option analysis and information, improving information flow, carrying out detailed monitoring of policies and their effectiveness, encouraging knowledge uptake and strengthening institutions and policy-making capacity. As further discussed in Chapter 6, the evaluation notes, however, that MAFAP is one of several policy monitoring initiatives in FAO, which is the consequence of the institutional fragmentation of FAO's policy work. The evaluation strongly recommends consolidating its approach to policy monitoring and impact assessment, rather than pursuing parallel overlapping initiatives. It would also be useful to institutionalize policy measurement and monitoring functions in FAO's programme of work and budget (see **Recommendations 2 and 3**).

5.3 Evaluation of the Findings on FAO's Policy Work

5.3.1 Relevance

248. Relevance is concerned particularly with “the right policies for whom” as well as with assessing the extent to which the policy support is meeting global and national needs and demands. For the most part, FAO global work is relevant and meeting the needs of the international community. They are also seen to lead international campaigns on reducing hunger and on addressing poverty through sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries. FAO has been at the forefront in highlighting issues related to addressing food security and rising prices as can be seen in Box 4 below.

Box 4: Addressing food security and rising prices

This evaluation took place in the midst of a period badged by many as a global food crisis — the second such crisis in three years. World food prices hit a record high in January 2011, driven by significant increases in the prices of wheat, maize, sugar and oils; rice was already high. These soaring prices have had a damaging impact on many of the world's poor, who spend much of their highly limited income on basic foodstuffs.

Coincident with the launch of the evaluation was a request from the G20 to several international organizations led by FAO,⁸⁵ “to work with key stakeholders to develop options for G20 consideration on how to better mitigate and manage the risks associated with the price volatility of food and other agricultural commodities, without distorting market behaviour, ultimately to protect the most vulnerable”. This indicates the ability of FAO to work effectively with other agencies (in what was essentially a knowledge management task),⁸⁶ and it also well indicates the high degree of confidence of a significant part of the international community to entrust such a challenging leadership task to FAO.

For concerned observers to know what is behind the price spike, it is natural to enquire of the FAO institutional data, where there is a wealth of information to be harvested at the click of a mouse. There is no shortage of opinion in cyberspace; from speculation, to natural and other phenomena.⁸⁷ But the growing evidence suggests

⁸⁵ IFAD, IFPRI, IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, UN HLTW WFP, WB and WTO, and led by FAO.

⁸⁶ Not all observers are agreed with the emphasis accorded to increased variability per se (e.g., Barrett and Bellemare 2011) although, as reflected in the SOFI 2011, FAO is unrepentant in emphasizing volatility as the arch enemy of the food insecure.

⁸⁷ *The Guardian* (23 June 2011) reporting on the G20 meeting noted: “President Nicolas Sarkozy on Wednesday again banged the drum on speculative activity, which some blamed for high food prices. ‘A market that is not regulated is not a market, but a lottery where fortune favours the most cynical instead of rewarding work, investment and value creation,’ he said in a speech. But G20 agriculture ministers have essentially handed over the problem to their financial counterparts. ‘We strongly encourage G20 finance ministers to take the appropriate decisions for a better regulation and supervision of agricultural financial markets,’ says the action plan.”

a worrying future, plagued by uncertainty. While several factors have surely contributed to soaring food prices, as well described in many FAO publications such as the series of SOFIs, what stands out is the extent to which severe weather events have disrupted agricultural production. And these severe weather events are exactly the kinds of thing being predicted by IPCC (e.g., 2007) as rising concentrations of greenhouse gases change the climate — which means that the recent food-price surges may be just the beginning of a more challenging saga.

Consider the case of wheat, whose price has wobbled in recent years (e.g., GIEWS 2011). The immediate cause of the wheat price spike is that world production was down sharply. The bulk of that production decline, according to FAO and U.S. Department of Agriculture data, reflects a sharp plunge in the former Soviet Union: a record heat wave and drought, of dimensions unprecedented. The Russian heat wave was only one of many extreme weather events, from dry weather in Brazil to unprecedented flooding in Australia that damaged world food production. The 2011 floods in Thailand, a major rice producer and exporter, are likely to see sharp increases in rice prices. Is climate change being reflected in contemporary food market phenomena?

Naturally one cannot attribute any one weather event to elevated levels of greenhouse gases or any other single factor. But the pattern of extreme highs and extreme weather in general may be becoming more common, consistent with IPCC predictive assessments. The evidence does, in fact, suggest that the recent experience is an instructive first taste of the disruption, economic and political, that must be faced in a warming world (e.g., Krugman 2011). And given failure to act adequately on greenhouse gases, there will be much more, and perhaps much worse, to come, according to the many analyses synthesized by FAO and others in a rapidly growing number of publications (e.g., FAO 2010, Nelson et al. 2009, 2010). FAO is committed to riding the climate “wave” and trying to get it to be less destructive in terms of food insecurity and broader development outcomes.⁸⁸ As FAO strives to achieve its objectives, climate change must thus be dealt with across several thematic areas, well beyond the resources of any one organization and even less so one division within FAO. Interdisciplinary teams are needed to address these issues, and, as noted, teams should include expertise in analysis of uncertainty.

249. At the regional level, FAO has not been as active except for its role in regional Forestry and Fisheries organizations. It was observed that although regional economic communities (RECs) are included in many policy related initiatives, a specific focus on regional integration issues for food and agricultural policy is lacking, especially after TCS eventually abandoned its work in this domain after 2005-2006. In Africa, FAO has been active in CAADP and increasingly in

⁸⁸ Beyond the global overviews just cited, the most severe impacts will surely be felt at local levels, such as in greatly threatened Bangladesh. Here, FAO seems to have relied mostly on analysis it has supported directly in-country (e.g., Baas and Ramasamy 2008): A 7 October 2010 press release put it this way. “...FAO has assisted the Government of Bangladesh in establishing plans for prioritizing investments that will improve the availability of food and reduce malnutrition. The FAO work is introducing new crop varieties with tolerant seeds in the coastal zones, and farmers are being trained to cope with changing weather patterns. Attention is also being paid to improving water and infrastructure management to protect fields from tidal surges and sea water intrusion. This work comes in response to a series of climate and market stresses that have impacted the food security of Bangladesh over recent years.” Other agencies have directly involved a wider range of institutional analyses, such as IFPRI, as in the World Bank synthesis by Yu et al. (2010). Meantime, FAO (leading, in harmony with other UN agencies) is actively supporting the Government efforts recently summarized as follows (ALM 2011): “The needs of the poor and vulnerable, including women and children, will be prioritised in all activities implemented under the Action Plan”. The Climate Change Action Plan comprises immediate, short, medium and long-term programmes. The Climate Change Action Plan will be implemented under the overall guidance of the National Environment Committee, chaired by the Chief Adviser. It will be coordinated by concerned Ministry of Environment and Forests. Programmes funded under the Plan will be implemented by Ministries or their agencies, with the involvement, as appropriate, of civil society and the private sector. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan has been developed by the Government of Bangladesh in consultation with civil society, including NGOs, research organisations and the private sector. It builds on the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), published in 2005. It will be reviewed and revised as experience and knowledge are gained in implementing adaptation and related research programmes.” The evaluation during its field visit in June 2011 was impressed with how engaged FAO was with the above Action Plan (well articulated in the CPF of May 2011, and seemingly in accord with Paris and Accra) and some of the specific efforts directed to the relatively more vulnerable Southern region (excepting some of the post-cyclone emergency activities such as provision of 2-wheel tractors).

SADC and COMESA, as well as in IGAD on transboundary animal disease issues. The relevance of the initial work FAO carried out in CAADP was questioned and actually undermined FAO credibility in some countries, as has been discussed above in relation with the "bankable projects". However, FAO is regaining its credibility through closer liaison with NEPAD agencies and international partners, and through the work of the FAO Investment Centre and active engagement in the countries. FAO has also helped to place the topic high on the international agenda and is once again closely associated with CAADP which is increasingly seen as an important vehicle for agricultural renewal.

250. FAO work in countries will increasingly be determined by the new CPF and as such should be addressing national priorities, as discussed above. However, there is some uncertainty that the policy work demanded will always be relevant to FAO global goals and the evaluation noted inconsistencies on the way in which priorities are being established in formulating the early CPFs. Many of the interlocutors visited considered that FAO needed to take a more proactive role in providing knowledge and capacity for emerging issues and ensure that the CPF addresses the real gaps that FAO is best placed to fill. Non-government stakeholders felt that FAO should provide more support to small-farmer issues whereas government interlocutors appreciated FAO support but considered that in many instances their footprint was too small to have a major impact and they were not always able to get the knowledge and support they needed on emerging issues.⁸⁹

5.3.2 *The right policy for whom?*

251. The issue of trade-offs between different stakeholders, including with regard to employment effects, is one that must be addressed for FAO to remain relevant. While it needs to maintain its neutrality in providing advice, it needs to be much more proactive in providing alternative scenarios, showing how these affect the three FAO global goals in the relevant region or Member Country. FAO policy work could be increasingly relevant in countries if it were to engage directly with the national institutions in developing these scenarios. This would also assist in improving effectiveness and sustainability by both grounding the work in reality and developing local capacity and ownership. Many of the countries requested more locally relevant work to address the issue of soaring food prices and the related issues of large farms versus small.⁹⁰

252. Officers interviewed in Eastern Europe and Central Asia understood why the primary focus is on Africa and Asia with some on South America but they did feel that there is a real demand for FAO to assist the countries in these regions, particularly in accession to EU and to WTO and in adapting some of the participatory rural and market development literature to their particular circumstances. It was felt that both in terms of language and examples much of the FAO knowledge is not relevant and that there is a real gap that FAO needs to fill. This contrasted

⁸⁹ 14 out of the 29 evaluations (8 Programme Evaluations and 6 Country Evaluations: 48%) reviewed have mentioned policy innovation as an area to address when improving the Organization's policy capacity, thematic coverage and dissemination. Evaluation recommendations such as from the Brazil, Ethiopia, DR Congo and Mozambique Country Evaluations and FNPP, Water, 'Roles of Agriculture' and Policy Assistance Programme Evaluations as well as others have noted that the Organization lacks innovative policy presence especially in adequately addressing: rising development thematic issues; project/programme transitions from emergency to longer term development phases; inclusion of research based development and investment mobilization methods and in ensuring a wide-spread use of multi-disciplinary input systems and mechanisms in policy formulation.

⁹⁰ E.g., Eastern Europe has many smallholders, but the evaluation was told that they do not receive much support and attention from their governments except for those in Moldova and that FAO is currently engaged in supporting large farms in Georgia. In Benin farmers told the evaluation that the government are providing incentives for ex-patriots to come and farm large farms but that there is very little support for small farmers who have shown themselves capable.

with visits in the other continents where, for the most part, FAO work was considered most relevant – the primary concern was lack of effective dissemination and uptake.

253. Issues related to gender only appear to get traction in policy work when policies are being developed specifically to address gender issues. In some projects it is given a cursory mention and it will be important to incorporate gender into more systematic analysis of policy assistance. The evaluation noted that following the 2011 Gender Audit and Gender Evaluation, FAO is now making concerted efforts to develop internal capacity on incorporating gender into projects and programmes throughout the Organization.
254. FAO responded positively to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 41, which requires UN agencies to find “ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them”. They established a working group that contributes to the inter-agency support group (IASG to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues - UNPFII) and developed an internationally well accepted FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. The document is clear and provides information on important entry points for FAO work. As such, FAO has shown itself to be relevant to an important set of stakeholders in establishing policy. The evaluation found, however, less evidence of this work on the ground.

5.3.3 Effectiveness

255. The evaluation found the work which FAO carries out at the international level to be effective with respect to raising issues relevant to its global goals and providing research and a platform for discussion. FAO has been successful in working with partners to establish international norms and some binding instruments which all play an important role in the effort to achieve the MDGs. However, FAO has been less effective in supporting to countries to ensure that they participate in the debate and directly contribute themselves to global policy formulation.
256. At the national level, this evaluation found major challenges to the effectiveness of FAO policy support, as has been discussed above in great detail (see Section 5.1.3). As reasons for limited effectiveness, the evaluation identified a range of factors starting from the lack of thorough policy analysis to the lack of attention to policy impact. **Recommendations 2 and 3** address this problem, which is seen to be a major shortcoming of FAO's policy work.
257. One of the constraints in effective policy support and effective capacity development is the high staff turnover and the difficulty of providing mentorship when there is such a high turnover. An interesting approach to developing capacity which may not be as expensive, could be through the newly established Masters and diploma certificates which FAO has developed and is providing in association with Universities to be offered to Member Country government staff and FAO national staff. It would be interesting to examine the impact of those who have taken the courses and to see whether they are both using their learning and to what extent it is shared with colleagues.
258. FAO is widely recognised as having a significant store of knowledge and the websites for the different programmes, departments and units are of varying but all relatively high standard. The real problem is that out in the field this evaluation found, along with many other evaluations, that the uptake is low. FAO is considerably more effective at generating knowledge than it is in sharing it – especially in sharing it with those who need it most to be able to use it to influence national policies.
259. The Organization prides itself as one of the largest banks of agricultural knowledge and know-how. Nevertheless, evaluation recommendations mostly indicated that FAO has been underachieving in its accumulation and, especially, dissemination of agriculture and environmental knowledge and information. In addition FAO is frequently criticised for its

relative lack of marketing and thus of being under-appreciated. The evaluation noted that even if FAO does not engage in high level publicity campaigns,⁹¹ it should better document and communicate the impact of its work. Most evaluations reviewed had recommendations indicating that the Organization needs to do a lot more in terms of promoting itself and of generating uptake of its knowledge products. The main points addressed by the recommendations were, better dialogue, improved websites, continued use of forums, building institutional linkages for creating awareness, seminars, and having international debates. Also, the FNPP Evaluation Recommendation 43 went further to acknowledge, that future similar programmes should contribute to an effort to mobilize the substantive knowledge accumulated in FAO and, in partnership with other institutions, to develop more effective mechanisms for dissemination.

5.3.4 Impact and Sustainability of FAO Support to Policy:

260. It was difficult for the evaluation to determine impact as there are no baselines against which to make the assessment. Based on the feedback received in interviews it appears that FAO impact with its policy assistance has often been limited, even though there are also remarkable successes, especially when linked to FAO's excellent global policy work. FAO does appear to have made some real impacts with respect to food policy in places such as Zanzibar and Mozambique, on Right to Food in Brazil on agricultural sector policies in Lesotho and Benin, on forestry legislation in most countries over many years, with particular impact on participatory forestry prior to 2000 and in fisheries' more recent work on participatory processes in Myanmar and building institutional capacity for regional policy implementation in the Lake Victoria basin. Emerging work on aquaculture in Africa is also assisting in the necessary policy enactment to promote smallholder systems. As pointed out above, it was particularly interesting for the evaluation to note the impact of technical work on policies, even though the policy impact was often unintended and not always well analysed or articulated. These impacts highlighted the importance of a strategy which helps FAO to mainstream policy into all, or most, of its work and to do this in ways that take into account potential impacts.

261. Sustainability appears to be an issue that all agencies grapple with. In many countries it is difficult to see policies being consistently implemented and adapting to new circumstances, after the end of a project or programme. Much of this relates to how effectively the policy is embedded into the fabric of the department responsible for it but, equally, the field visits highlighted how important it is to reach beyond the Ministry of Agriculture and to get ownership from other ministries and in particular the Ministry of Finance. It also essential to get all the stakeholders most affected fully engaged. Laws, regulations, policies and norms are only as effective and sustainable as their full acceptance by the majority of those affected.

262. The evaluation found, along with most other evaluations, that sustainability is highly dependent on capacity and that it is also affected by incentives, by critical mass and by facilitation and networking. It is essential that a strategy for effective and sustainable policy support takes all these factors into consideration.

5.3.5 Timeliness

263. As indicated above, this dimension has been added to the standard criteria since policy advice needs to be timely to be effective. The evaluation showed a rather mixed record of FAO's policy work in this regard. At the global level, FAO has overall been able to respond in a timely

⁹¹ One respondent remarked that FAO, unlike other UN agencies such as WFP, has difficulties in getting Member support for allocation of funding to public-relations activities. As discussed above, visibility of FAO is not always a goal of Members.

manner to emerging challenges such as the food price crisis, even though one might ask why FAO was not able to project the possibility of such a crisis much earlier. At the global level, FAO has also been able to provide timely advice in international negotiations, as in the case of climate change or international trade. FAO's efforts to establish voluntary guidelines on land governance can also be seen to be timely, acknowledging that reaching consensus among Members on such a sensitive topic is necessarily time-consuming. At the regional level, there are also some remarkable positive experiences. For example, through its early efforts in the CAADP process, FAO has addressed the need to place agriculture back into the center of the development agenda years before this became a general trend.

264. At the country level, however, the evaluation noted major challenges for FAO to respond in a timely manner, and to use windows of opportunities to promote pro-poor policy change. It is particularly disconcerting that FAO is not able to respond in a more timely manner at the country level, because—as highlighted above—FAO has better opportunities to do so than almost any other organization because of the unmatched trust that ministries of agriculture have in FAO, because of FAO's presence in most developing countries, and because of the high access of FAO to key agricultural policy makers. The reasons why FAO is not able to use this opportunity for timely response are discussed in Section 5.1.3 in detail, and they are further analysed in Chapter 6.

6. Analysis: How do FAO's Institutional Set-Up, Resources and Management Influence its Performance?

265. Based on the framework presented in Figure 3 (Chapter 3), the first part of this chapter analyses how FAO's institutional set-up, capacity and management influence FAO's performance. On this basis, the second part of the chapter discusses reform strategies for FAO's policy work.

6.1 *Is lack of human and financial resources the main problem?*

266. Staff discussions held during the evaluation often highlighted "lack of adequate capacity" as the main reason why FAO is not in a better position to fulfil its "Core Function D: Policy and strategy options and advice" at the country level. The reduction of policy officers in decentralized offices from 40 to 20 is quoted as an obvious case in point. However, it appears useful to reconsider the proposition of "limited capacity" taking into account that the staffs in the TC Department at Headquarters are also supposed to fully support the work at the country level.

267. As indicated above, there are 20 policy officers in the decentralized offices, which results in an average ratio of 3.7 countries per policy officer, if one counts the 74 countries in which FAO has a full-fledged country office, and a ratio of 6.2 countries per policy officer, if one counts all 124 countries where FAO has a representation of any kind (see the map at the end of Annex 2). If one also counts those staff located at Headquarter in the Policy Assistance and Food Security Services, the ratio is 1.3 countries per professional staff, and 2.2 countries, respectively. Based on these figures, one cannot conclude that, in principle, FAO has a particularly low capacity to provide country-level policy advice, since it seems quite reasonable that one policy officer handles 2.2 countries.⁹²

268. The comparison of staff numbers with other organizations above suggests that none of the other international organizations that are active in the field of providing policy advice have similar staff resources available. One also has to take into account that these figures only capture regular programme staff. The figures do not include policy staff hired using project funding. Moreover, these figures do not include consultancy services that are widely used for policy work. According to the FAOREP survey, 93% of the policy activities considered to be the most important ones made use of consultants. International consultants were involved in 65% of these activities. With an average funding of more than USD 600,000 for the policy activities identified to be important, there is obviously room to bring in external expertise, as well.

⁹² This assumes that all professional staff in these units do the same type of unspecialised policy assistance work, though this is not always the case, as some are specialised in certain areas (water/irrigation policy, sub-sector policy, trade policy, etc.). Also this includes junior officers who may not yet be able to take responsibility for countries. Nonetheless, it gives an idea of the dimensions.

Table 1. **Ratios of policy staff to countries with FAO representation**

Category of staff	Staff numbers in category	Ratio of countries to staff, considering the 74 countries with full-fledged country offices	Ratio of countries to staff, considering the 124 countries with any type of representation
Policy officers in decentralized offices	20	3.7	6.2
Staff in the Policy Assistance Support Service	22	3.4	5.6
Staff in the Food Security Service	15	4.9	8.3
Total	57	1.3	2.2

Source: FAO, HR Division (CSH) and information on the Policy Assistance Support Service

269. One also has to consider that these figures do not take into account the staff in the ESA, EST and ESD Divisions, which have a total of 86 staff members (see above – though, here too, many of these 86 are not directly involved in policy work, especially in EST). While staff in these divisions are meant to focus on mainly global normative tasks, it is conceivable that with reorganization and redefinition of roles, they still could spend a share of their time providing country-specific policy support, which could have the added benefit of helping them to remain connected to the reality on the ground, and to use the opportunity of FAO's presence in the country to conduct globally relevant work.

270. Moreover, there is substantial country-level policy support work conducted in TCI, for example in connection with the development of country investment plans in the context of their provision of services to IFIs, and also through the work they are assigned to do in support of the National Food Security Programmes run by the Food Security Service. TCI estimates that in the many cases where they contribute to FAO support to processes such as CAADP and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GASFP), 85% of the policy work is conducted by its staff.

271. These figures suggest that one cannot simply attribute the performance problems in terms of policy advice at the country level to a general lack of capacity, staff and resources for this area of FAO's work. The figures rather suggest that there are problems in the way in which these resources are organized and managed. In fact, it seems problematic to recommend an increase of the resources for policy work as long as the problems remain unaddressed that prevent the effective management of the resources that FAO already has in this area.

6.2 *How conducive is FAO's institutional set-up for conducting effective policy work?*

272. In line with earlier evaluations, this evaluation finds that the fragmentation of FAO's policy work constitutes a serious constraint to FAO's performance, particularly with regard to policy advice at the country level. Next to the horizontal fragmentation, which has been the focus of earlier evaluations, this evaluation also finds an increasing vertical fragmentation as a result of the decentralization process. Both problems are discussed in the following in more detail.

6.2.1 *Horizontal fragmentation*

273. The description of the institutional set-up in Section 4.2 and the organogram (Figure 3) clearly show that policy work is dispersed rather widely throughout the Organization. The 2001 Policy Evaluation found that "policy expertise is now dispersed among many units of FAO and there is poor coordination and exchange of information across units. This could result in duplication of

effort and certainly results in loss of potential benefits from cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences.” The 2008 Policy Assistance Paper quotes these statements (FAO, 2008: 9) and adds that some staff members feel that while this is needed at the level of the Organization as a whole, even within the various Divisions the ‘policy priorities and messages need to be more clearly defined and not left to individual staff preferences.’ (FAO, 2008: 10). Likewise, the IEE (see Chapter 2) recommended to “address the fragmented approach to policy work, especially for economic, institutional and nutrition policy (even in economic and trade policy, evaluators found a competitive attitude between units). At the same time, to preserve the close integration with their sectors, fisheries, forestry and livestock policy should continue to be handled separately” (IEE, Recommendation 3.23). Based on this recommendation, IEE proposed a rather radical restructuring of the ES and TC departments (see below).

274. This evaluation also finds that the horizontal fragmentation of FAO's policy work is a major problem. Unlike the IEE, this evaluation did not, however, observe a competitive attitude between units in the ES Department.⁹³ The evaluation also found rather a rather close collaboration between the ES Department and some of the divisions in technical departments, in particular, AGP, which does not have its own policy unit. AGA felt that ES has too strong a focus on crops, but this problem was addressed through the creation of a separate policy unit AGAL. This evaluation found that the link to the subject-matter expertise is very important for the sub-sector specific policy work on livestock, fisheries and forestry. However, the Team observed that this policy work could often benefit from a stronger analytical perspective, e.g., with regard to an economic analysis of different policy options, or an institutional analysis of the roles that the public, the private and third sector could best play in a particular policy field. In the case of AGA, the evaluation observed a certain disconnect between the policy work in AGAL, and policy activities in other units, such as Animal Genetic Resources Branch (AGAG). The activities of those units appeared not to be recognized by AGAL as policy-related.
275. What this evaluation identified as the major problem of horizontal fragmentation, which affects policy work at the country level, is the disconnect between policy analysis conducted in the ES Divisions, and the policy advice work conducted in TCS by Policy Assistance and the Food Security Service and the policy officers in decentralized offices. Similar to the earlier evaluations, this evaluation could not identify *systematic* mechanisms by which demand for policy advice is fed back to ESA, EST or ESW, neither are there systematic channels by which, *vice versa*, results of the analytical work from these ES divisions is fed back to TCS and to the countries. Where linkages exist, they are ad hoc and rely either on projects (as in case of the Bangladesh policy project that is run by ESA), or on personal relations (as in case of a former FAOREP in India, who directly passed on requests for information from the Indian government or parliament to the ESA director).
276. In addition to their global policy work, the ES Divisions conduct research at the country level, as their publication research shows. However, the priority setting for this policy work does not seem to be influenced by any strategic analysis of country needs, but rather by what donors are willing to fund, and perhaps staff preferences. As an indication, in the review period, ESA published papers on topics such as “Impacts of International Migration and Remittances on Source Country Household Incomes in Small Island States: Fiji and Tonga”. In contrast, agricultural sector reviews, which could inform policy advice at the country level, could not be found among ESA's publication record – see Annex 6.
277. As an indication of the problem of horizontal fragmentation, the evaluation also found problems of duplication in policy work, which an institution that claims to have limited capacity

⁹³ The Guidance document published by ESW in 2011, “Guidance on how to address rural employment and decent work concerns in FAO country activities” is an example of collaboration among Divisions, and at the same time an example of ES to link with decentralized offices.

for policy work should be particularly eager to avoid. One example is the pursuit of the development of national food security policies and programmes with the support of the Food Security Service, which runs in parallel with the development of general agricultural strategies in the same countries at the same time with the support of the Policy Assistance Support Service and TCI. As one interviewee remarked, “you have the Food Security Service giving food security advice, and you have the Policy Assistance Support Service giving policy advice, and the difference may be not that much.” As an indication of lack of communication at HQ level, there were also cases where TCI staff only found out that the Food Security Service was developing a national food security strategy (in parallel to a CAADP process) when they got invited to a country workshop on the topic. The in-house CAADP task force came to the conclusion that policy work on national food security strategies should be integrated into CAADP processes, which seems absolutely necessary because, as a review of food security plans and CAADP strategies shows, they address to a large extent the same issues and fields of investment. Still, efforts to integrate food security strategies into the CAADP process have been variable and **competing FAO food security planning processes still occur at country level.**

278. Another example of potential duplication of efforts can be seen in the fact that there are three different and quite independent initiatives to monitor agricultural policies with FAO: TCSP runs FAPDA (www.fao.org/tc/fapda-tool/), the Food and Agricultural Policy Decision Analysis Tool, which tracks food and agriculture policy decisions at country level and makes this information publicly available. ESA runs MAFAP (<http://www.fao.org/mafap/mafap-home/en/>), a tool for “Monitoring African Food and Agricultural Policies.” A third effort is undertaken in the Food Security Service, which runs MAFS (Mapping Actions for Food Security, see <http://www.mafsan.org/>). Some efforts are made for creating links between these systems, such as attendance of each other’s workshops by staff. Still, not everyone in ESA, for example, seemed to be aware that FAPDA exists, though this may be due to the fact that it is a new initiative. While each of these initiatives is exciting and well intentioned, and while they have some complementarities, this evaluation concluded that it would be better for both FAO and *especially for the users of such tools* to have **one common platform** rather than three different systems. Moreover, one needs to take into account that there are similar policy mapping and monitoring initiatives by other organizations, such as ReSAKSS (<http://www.resakss.org/>), the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System run by IFPRI. There is collaboration in this regard, as IFPRI is a member of our MAFAP Steering Committee, and MAFAP works with ReSAKSS in all “MAFAP-intensive countries”, but the question still arises as to whether a concentration on fewer systems would be useful.

6.2.2 Vertical fragmentation

279. In addition to the horizontal fragmentation of policy work, the evaluation also observed serious problems of vertical fragmentation. It appears that in the field of policy work, the decentralization process, in spite of its good intentions to reduce bureaucracy within FAO, had rather problematic results. As part of the decentralization process, any formal accountability links between the policy officers in decentralized offices and the Divisions of the TC Department at Headquarters were abolished. According to the interviews, the Policy Assistance Support Service is not consulted on the work plans of the policy officers, it does not always receive back-to-office reports, it has no means of quality control of any of the work done by

policy officers unless specifically invited to provide it, and it is not involved in the performance evaluation. The only formal link that still exists is recruitment of new staff.⁹⁴

280. The interviews suggest that some of the technical departments, which were subject to similar changes, were able to maintain relatively close relations with their staff in decentralized offices in spite of the increased autonomy, using mostly informal procedures and efforts to create a community of practice. According to the interviews, the Policy Assistance Support Service, however, has had substantial difficulties to maintain close relations with the policy officers in decentralized offices, in spite of similar efforts (e.g., they bring all the policy officers from the decentralized offices to Rome once a year for an annual global meeting). One important reason seems to be that managers of decentralized offices regard policy officers as “generalists” because the majority of the policy officers are economists and unlike technical officers not specialized in one particular sub-sector of agriculture. Hence office managers feel that they can use policy officers for other purposes than providing policy advice to country governments, as has already been indicated above. As one interviewee expressed it, reflecting a common complaint, “they are used to prepare budgets and the work plans, they have to represent the coordinator when he is not there; they end up with anything that cannot be delegated to other staff.” It was also reported that, apparently for this conflict of interest, some heads of decentralized offices do not want their policy officers to maintain close relations with the Policy Assistance Support Service in Headquarters, except for those cases that the decentralized offices want to have transferred due to performance problems.
281. The “cutting of administrative ties” with the Headquarters would be acceptable if the alternative mechanisms to create accountability for technical work (“Functional Relationships,” as described in the April 2011 Circular on Roles and Relationships) were actually systematically applied for the policy work in subregional offices. However, this does not seem to be the case. The lines of reporting (see above) now go through the Sub-regional office heads to the ADG/Regional Representative. It remains unclear through what mechanisms the heads of sub-regional and regional offices are held accountable for the policy work conducted at the country level. The FAOREp survey indicated that only 25% of all policy activities considered to be most relevant by the respondents received support from the subregional offices, even though these offices are supposed to be “the first point of call.” To quote an example from the country visits held for this evaluation, the mid-term evaluation of the Sudan Productive Capacity Recovery Programme found serious problems of quality control, which interviewees attributed to the lack of backstopping from the respective subregional office.
282. Another indication of vertical fragmentation is the observation that, with the notable exception of SOFA, none of the Headquarters policy units (neither the Policy Assistance Support Service nor the Food Security Service nor the ES divisions) seem to play any significant role in facilitating access for policy advisors at the national level to HQ global publications that could be relevant for their work. The FAOREp survey (see above) indicated that research papers or analytical work produced by FAO or by other international organizations were hardly ever used to inform the country-level policy work. Likewise, the survey of government officials showed that the FAO publications they were most familiar with are the “State-of” flagship publications, rather than with any more specific policy-relevant work. The policy work conducted by HQ Divisions at the country level often seems “invisible”, partly because it is not translated into publications or policy brief. In a similar vein, the Team

⁹⁴ One should note that what has disappeared is the *formal* reporting link between HQ and the decentralized offices. Officially, the work of the policy officers in the decentralized offices is still supposed to be technically ‘backstopped’ and quality-controlled by the HQ unit (see the Circular on Roles and Relationships, section on ‘functional relationships’). The problem is that without direct administrative responsibility lines, this does not happen systematically. Moreover, without administrative authority, it is difficult for HQ to fulfil this role if there is a “capture” problem, as further discussed below.

observed that FAO staff involved in policy advice in countries with a CAADP process seemed unaware of any of the policy analysis conducted specifically for these countries by, e.g., IFPRI, the World Bank or other partner agencies. This indicates that FAO is quite far away from achieving its goal of “drawing on the full range of technical expertise in FAO, its Members and Partners.”

6.2.3 Coordination mechanisms

283. While institutional re-structuring might seem an obvious response to the fragmentation problem, one needs to take into account that organizational structure alone does not ensure coordination and use of synergies, even though it can play a major role in facilitating it, especially in large organizations such as FAO. In fact, one of the respondents remarked that the collaboration between what is now ESA and the Policy Assistance Support Service had never been as low as during the time when both units were still in the same department. Obviously, as a complementary approach to institutional restructuring is the setting up of coordination mechanisms to ensure the collaboration of staff working on different but related topics.
284. This evaluation found that there are a number of coordination mechanisms that are working well, which have been described above. However, the evaluation did not find that there were appropriate coordination mechanisms that would off-set the problems caused by the horizontal and vertical fragmentation of FAO's policy work and its negative impact on country-level policy advice. The coordination for CAADP support can be considered as an exception to some extent. In this case, TCI, the Policy Assistance Support Service and the Food Security Service agree on the question as to which Division is leading the CAADP process in the country. There is a core group of staff from these units that meets on a need basis, and a wider group of staff that can be involved, as well.⁹⁵ However, this mechanism did not avoid the rather damaging duplication regarding National Food Security Programmes (see above), nor was it designed to pull in expertise from the ES divisions. As already emphasized by earlier evaluations, there is no focal point or organizational unit in FAO that has responsibility for the overall coordination of policy work, even though the formulation of core Function D refers to “a strong policy assistance node involving all concerned units.”
285. Likewise, there is—apart from the CAADP group—no mechanism by which policy expertise for specific countries is coordinated across the different policy units. The ongoing development of Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) should, in principle, fulfil this function, but it was not observed that this is the case yet. Like other policy activities, the CPF suffers from lack of analytical underpinnings. The 2008 FAO Policy Assistance Paper [referenced herein as FAO 2008] had recommended the progressive development of a country level policy intelligence system which would “gather the key information needed to understand, analyse and monitor: the national level policy context (participation, ownership, etc.), the national policy climate (...), the key actors including their role, their interests, their capacity and the balance of powers, the important issues at stake, the policy assistance needs (e.g., capacities).” (FAO, 2008: 20). FAO has also conducted conceptual work that called for a “Policy Intelligence and Preparedness” (PIP) approach. Yet, apart from the laudable but disconnected policy monitoring efforts mentioned above, no such country level intelligence and preparedness system has been created. To the contrary, according to interview information, the agricultural sector briefs, which the policy officers used to produce earlier, and which could have provided the basis for such a policy intelligence system, were discontinued as a consequence of decentralization and not replaced by any other tool.

⁹⁵Moreover, there is a considerable degree of coordination between different agencies at their headquarter levels (including World Bank and IFPRI, see CAADP Annex 4), even though this does not necessarily translate into coordination of those agencies at the country level (as was indicated by the country experience of DRC).

6.2.4 Management

286. Chapter 3 presented a detailed account of the management procedures used for FAO's policy work. The findings suggest that the instruments in place have been successful in promoting strong performance regarding FAO's global policy work, but they have been insufficient to address the performance problems at the country level. Some management instruments, such as the CPF, may be too new to show an effect. This also applies to the planned new mobility policy in human resource management, and other approaches to address the general human resource management problems discussed above.

6.3 *Strategies to improve FAO's policy work*

287. As shown in Chapter 4, the evaluations of FAO's policy work conducted during the past decade, including auto-evaluations of the respective units themselves, have come to very similar conclusions to those of this evaluation. Chapter 2 also summarized the wide range of recommendations that have been made in past evaluations with the goal to improve FAO's performance in the field of policy assistance. Yet, hardly any of the past recommendations have been implemented. Far-reaching suggestions for institutional change, such as the IEE recommendation 6.9 to create an "Economic, Social and Development Policy and Programmes Department" headed by a Chief Policy Officer, were outright rejected. Only "soft" measures that do not involve any organizational or managerial changes have been implemented, such as providing training to FAOReps and the (short-lived) creation of a Policy Task Force. Therefore, it seems appropriate to discuss the question of why so few of the earlier recommendations have been implemented before presenting new suggestions to improve FAO's policy work.

6.3.1 Why have past reform proposals not been implemented?

Resistance against far-reaching change in organizational structure

288. Reforms that involve far-reaching restructuring obviously affect the interests of both the staff and the managers in all organizational units concerned. Not surprisingly, discussions about the non-implementation of past proposals held for this evaluation often pointed to interests of the managers to be affected by the proposed changes. However, reform proposals create uncertainty beyond the interests of individual managers, since no staff member can be sure either whether he or she will "win or lose" under the new arrangements. The transaction costs of organizational change are extremely high, because such change and - even more so - the internal politics surrounding it, may consume the time and efforts of everyone concerned, perhaps for years, thus detracting scarce time and resources from the actual policy work to be done. Therefore, it is not surprising that there has been "little appetite for shifting boxes," to quote one interviewee. The fact that substantial organizational changes have already been carried out as part of the reform process (including the abolition of one level of hierarchy) contributes to the resistance against additional changes.

Lack of organizational accountability and incentives to deliver policy advice at country level

289. The fact that organizational changes create uncertainty, affect staff interests and cause high transaction costs are certainly important reasons why past recommendations have not been implemented. However, there must be more fundamental underlying reasons to account for the failure to address the long-standing problems of FAO's policy work at country level, even though these problems have been pointed out in numerous evaluations again and again during the entire decade covered by this evaluation. Only an organization that is not held accountable

for the outcome of its policy work at country level can afford to simply ignore its performance problems in this field for so long.

290. This lack of organizational accountability is partly rooted in the nature of policy work at the country level. In technical fields, there is often a problem pressure that creates accountability. For example, if FAO's role is to help in combatting outbreaks of Avian Influenza or deal with urgent plant protection problems, the pressure by the governments, stakeholders and donors to get the problem solved is high. Moreover, it is relatively straightforward to judge the outcome, and to attribute the outcome to the activities performed. In providing advice on agricultural policies or food security problems, the problem pressure is less obvious, and the link between action and effect is less straightforward. There is a considerable problem of attributing any concrete policy change, much less the effect of such change, to any specific bit of policy advice, since there are always many, many factors and actors involved. Moreover, FAO faces a particular dilemma since it is usually close to Ministries of Agriculture, and those ministries often face political disincentives (such as vested interests) to pursue recommended agricultural policy changes. Hence, the governments of FAO's Member countries will not hold FAO accountable for effectively supporting such policy change. This dilemma is well reflected in the comment of one respondent in the FAORep survey conducted for this evaluation:

"The FAO prefers to get stuck with "technical" issues and with a "piecemeal project approach" instead of a "policy approach", which could be more efficient and less costly. Even when the opportunities for influencing policies are good, the FAO avoids participating in the policy dialogue because it may disturb its good relationship with the government. Meantime, other UN organizations and less qualified and experienced NGOs participate in the policy dialogue and shape decisions!"

291. Since country governments do not create accountability and incentives to deliver on policy advice, one needs to identify alternative mechanisms for creating accountability. In case of specific donor-funded activities, accountability can be created through the funding mechanism. Though the accountability then is to the donor rather than the Member country, this link seems to partly work for specific policy projects funded by donors and for the policy work with IFIs by TCI. However, in these cases, the donors have so far focused on *outputs*, such as the production of a particular policy document or process, e.g., a country investment plan or stakeholder consultations and training sessions. Even donors have not created accountability for policy *outcomes*, such as concrete policy changes, and further down, the impact of those changes. This is somewhat surprising, because - in spite of the attribution problem for policy work mentioned above - the same donors have been placing considerable pressure on other organizations, such as IFPRI, to monitor, document and improve the *impact* of their policy work (also discussed in chapter 5).

Misguided decentralization and the problem of "capture"

292. One recommendation of past evaluations regarding institutional change that was, in fact, implemented was to create more autonomy for decentralized offices. This change has been part of a general structural reform, which of course was not specific to policy work. It was not the mandate of this evaluation to assess decentralization in general, but the evaluation had to address the implication of the current decentralization strategies for FAO's policy work. In this respect, the findings of this evaluation indicate that the decentralization reform exaggerated rather than reduced FAO's problems to deliver high-quality policy assistance at the country level. This can be attributed to a limitation of the decentralization recommendation by the IEE. In discussing decentralization, the IEE criticized the "lack of real institutional authority" of regional offices and the fact that the decentralized offices "must negotiate and agree with the parent technical division on the technical work plans." (IEE, 2007: 255). The IEE also stated that it "supports full implementation of the decision to accord the offices autonomy in the use of their technical staff and establishment of the main reporting line to the Regional Representative." (p. 256). The IEE did not, however, make any recommendations on how

quality control and technical supervision of the work in decentralized offices should be maintained, if key linkages that would allow Headquarters to play a role in this regard, such as joint work planning, are simply cut. Likewise, it appears that management did not pay attention to this problem either. In this sense, the current evaluation found that past decentralization recommendations were “misguided”. The Team is convinced that decentralization does, indeed, have a strong potential for improving policy work if *appropriate mechanisms to create accountability* for policy work are put in place. This topic is further discussed below. Box 5 provides some insights from the literature on decentralization that are relevant for FAO.

293. One particularly serious problem that has occurred in the context of the current decentralization efforts is the use of policy officers in decentralized offices, who are seen as “generalists” for administrative and other purposes, as already described above. Using the language of the organizational literature, one could describe this as a problem of “capture” within the Organization (organizational resources are used for other purposes than those for which they were created). Avoiding capture of resources and ensuring proper technical oversight is a well-known problem of decentralization (countries that decentralized their agricultural services face similar problems). There are some efforts to address this problem, but they are rather recent.⁹⁶ Overall, the capture problem can also be seen as an indication of a low priority assigned to policy work.
294. The problem of “capture” also seems to play a role not only with regard to the vertical fragmentation problem, but also with regard to the horizontal fragmentation problem described above. Some interviewees remarked that separating policy analysis from policy advice increased the possibilities that Senior Management might directly influence the type of policy advice being pursued at the country level, even when in contradiction with the results of FAO's own analysis.
295. A case in point over the evaluation period has been the strong emphasis by the agency's Director-General on pursuing ‘national food security programmes’ and action plans at the national level. While the effort to promote more attention to food security is certainly important and in line with FAO's mandate, it was observed that the policy assistance units and country offices, under direction from the office of the DG, often pursued these activities in parallel with other, different advice and processes undertaken by FAO in the same countries, and received rather limited analytical support. Interviewed staff involved in these activities reported they have had to follow directives on strategies for food security that were not in line with their professional judgment as the agency experts in this field, e.g., by neglecting livelihood and nutrition-related aspects in favour of productivity-focused activities.⁹⁷ Such problems of “capture” within the Organization do not only affect FAO's performance in the area of policy advice, they also constitute an obstacle to the implementation of recommendations for changes in FAO's institutional structures and policies that would reduce the scope for “capture.”
296. The decentralization literature (see Box 5) also points to the problem of “capture” in the decisions on staffing. The Team was confronted with the concern, which was also voiced by UN partners, that the choice of candidates for FAO Representative positions was influenced by “political” considerations,” which may also be seen as a capture problem. This concern is not new, the IEE also pointed to “the perception of the posts being filled with ‘political appointees’” (IEE, 2007: 318). With regard to policy, it is worth noting that the IEE also expressed the concern that policy functions were not included in the FAORep functions in

⁹⁶ The Team was informed that document JM 2011.2/3 submitted to the Joint Meeting of the 108th PC and 140th FC in October 2011 indicated a provision to abolish these practices.

⁹⁷ The evidence collected by the Team indicates that this problem was still relevant at the time of the evaluation.

2007, even though that had been requested as early as 1989.⁹⁸ This reflects an overall low attention to policy work. The evaluation noted that the recent Circular on Responsibilities and Relationships is still not very explicit on the functions of the FAORep with regard to policy.⁹⁹

Box 5: How to best decentralize? Insights for FAO from the decentralization literature

The evaluation Team noted that the way in which decentralization has been implemented at FAO, so far, has not been conducive for FAO's policy assistance work, especially at the country level. Moreover, the Team observed that decentralization was sometimes discussed as if it was an end in itself, or as if the same decentralization strategy was conducive for all aspects of FAO's policy work. To throw more light on this debate, this box summarizes some key findings from the literature on decentralization. Even though this literature mostly refers to countries rather than organizations, some of the insights and experiences are relevant for FAO.

1) Need for a differentiated approach to decentralization

The level of government or, in FAO's case, the organizational level to which a function should be assigned depends on a variety of factors, therefore, a one-size-fits all approach is not recommendable. The economic literature on fiscal federalism and the literature on governance and organization can help to identify these factors. The following ones seem particularly relevant for policy work at FAO:

1. *Economies of scale*: Very specialized services are better not decentralized. This implies that policy analysts that have very specific skills, such as macro-economic modelling, might best be assigned to HQ or regional level so that they can serve a large number of countries.
2. *Diversity of local demand*: Services that need to respond to very diverse local demands are better decentralized. This indicates that assigning policy assistance to sub-regions is only justified if the policy demands in the respective sub-region are indeed rather similar. Otherwise, it might be more effective to assign policy assistance services to the country, even though this implies focusing on selected priority countries.
3. *Scope for capture and political interference*: "Capture" (that is the misuse of human and financial resources for other than the assigned functions) and political interference may occur at different levels of decentralization, therefore, there is a need for a careful analysis of the options to control for this problem at different levels. This question is inherently linked to the question of accountability, which is addressed in the next point.

Currently, FAO's decentralization strategy does not seem to be based on a thorough analysis as to what policy functions are best assigned to what levels. They rather seem to be based on the unchallenged assumption that the subregional level is somehow most appropriate for providing country-level policy assistance. This evaluation recommends using a more differentiated approach, based on a context-specific analysis.

2) Need to combine fiscal, administrative and political decentralization

The literature on decentralization distinguishes between fiscal, administrative and political decentralization, and points for the need of a combined approach to be able to create accountability. Experience has shown that administrative decentralization often works better if staff in decentralized offices is indeed accountable to locally elected bodies. Likewise, it is important for the creation of accountability that locally elected bodies have discretionary authority over financial resources in order

⁹⁸ As an indication, the 2007 Evaluation (IEE, 2007: 258-259) noted: "The 1989 review of FAO stated 'The potentially wider role of the FAO Representative of assisting governments in developing policy options with substantive interaction with the relevant ministries and making use of FAO's worldwide experience and capability has not been adequately utilized'. Indeed, policy support to the country is not listed among FAOR functions and based on the findings of the IEE country visits, this is still the case."

⁹⁹ The circular mentions only in an Annex, when defining the role of the FAORep vis-à-vis the emergency coordinator, that "The FAOR will also be responsible for negotiations with donors and government officials on policy issues."

to have incentives to create accountability. At the same time, there is a need to control for elite capture at the local government level, to create strong career incentives for staff in decentralized offices, and to maintain technical oversight and backstopping for them. The experience has also shown that empowering locally elected bodies requires time and capacity building.

Applying this differentiation to FAO, one may consider the shift of staff to decentralized offices as administrative decentralization, while making the Regional Conferences governing bodies can be seen as the equivalent of political decentralization. Fiscal decentralization would imply shifting discretionary authority over financial resources to decentralized offices and to decentralized governing bodies. It is worth noting that, unlike the regional offices, the subregional offices and the country offices of FAO do not have governing bodies as their counterparts. Hence, other mechanisms may be needed to make up for this deficit, such as organizing stakeholder consultations at country and subregional levels, using administrative mechanisms to create accountability, and sensitizing the Regional Conferences to their oversight role for FAO's subregional and country performance. Applying the country experience to FAO also suggests a need for capacity development of Regional Conferences to strengthen their role in FAO's decentralized governance. Likewise, the insight that country staff in decentralized offices needs strong career incentives as well as technical backstopping and oversight seems highly relevant for FAO, as well.

3) Need to acknowledge that decentralization is inherently a political process

A third insight from the decentralization literature is the fact that decentralization is inherently a political process, which is inevitably influenced by political interests at the central level. One implication of this is the problem that fiscal decentralization often lags behind political and administrative decentralization, which limits the effectiveness of the decentralization approach. Likewise, the decisions made on decentralization, such as the level to which functions are assigned or the locations where decentralized units are placed are often influenced by political considerations rather than analytical considerations. Applying these insights to FAO implies that a critical review of past decentralization may well be justified when deciding further steps towards decentralization.

Sources: Bardhan (2002), Bardhan and Mookherjee (2002 and 2006), Birner and Linacre (2008), Birner and von Braun (2009) and World Bank (2007).

6.4 Reform options

297. This section presents a set of reform options that have the potential to address the problems identified in the evaluation. The section also includes an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages and the feasibility of these options, taking into account the reasons identified for the non-implementation of earlier policy recommendations. The reform options developed here also followed the general principle that they should be aligned with, rather than contradict, current reform efforts within FAO, such as the use of Country Programming Frameworks, Medium-Term planning procedures, and the current plans defining the structure and functioning of FAO's decentralized office network (see document JM11.2.3, dated October 12, 2011, and the recent Circular on Responsibilities and Relationships). Based on this analysis, the evaluation Team presents its conclusion regarding the options to pursue, as reflected in the Recommendations in Chapter 7.

Strengthening Accountability for Policy Assistance Impact

298. According to the above analysis, the main underlying problems for FAO's challenge to deliver high-quality policy assistance at the country level is a **lack of accountability** in FAO for achieving this outcome in combination with the "capture" problem discussed above. The current move of FAO to a results-based management creates new opportunities to address these long-standing problems. To use these opportunities, the evaluation recommends four measures.

It is important to note that these measures have to be adopted together to be effective. Moreover, implementing these four measures is essential for the effectiveness of the institutional changes recommended by the evaluation.

6.4.1 Measure 1: Create a policy intelligence and preparedness system at the country level

299. This evaluation strongly endorses the recommendation developed in the FAO's 2008 Policy Assistance Paper to create a country-level policy intelligence system. Taking FAO's work into account and the need to consider political context outlined above, it is recommended to expand this to a "policy intelligence and preparedness" (PIP) system. This system will provide the basis for results-based management of FAO's country-level policy assistance and for impact monitoring. This system should include two elements:

300. *1) A review of the agriculture, food and nutrition sector in the respective country:* This review should be conducted in close collaboration with the policy units in the ministries and local research organizations concerned, and it can be done together with other organizations active in the agricultural sector, such as the World Bank and IFPRI. It should build upon existing efforts, such as the analytical work done as part of the CAADP process, the process to develop national food security strategies, or other processes. The review should be *analytical* rather than descriptive, and focus on identifying the most important policy issues in the country, such as the *country-specific most binding constraints* to food security and agricultural development, and the most *promising policy and institutional reform options*.¹⁰⁰ The review should pull in the expertise from different policy units of FAO, including the ES Divisions and the policy (and other) units in the technical departments.¹⁰¹ Attention to gender, employment and other social equity issues will be important in conducting this review, with support and backstopping from ESW. Such a review corresponds well with the type of analysis that is recommended as basis for the Country Programming Framework (CPF). Therefore, it is recommended to conduct this review as part of the CPF exercise. The CPF should be aligned to the government planning cycle (typically 4-5 years) and should be updated annually. This timeline also fits the review proposed here.¹⁰²

301. The review should be subject to rigorous quality control, involving external experts. It should also be reviewed in donor coordination groups where those exist. While coordination with other international organizations is important, this sector review will provide FAO with the opportunity to provide at the country level what FAO has achieved internationally with its flagship publications such as SOFA: *an independent and balanced assessment based on the best available evidence*, which may not necessarily coincide with the policy reforms that various donors are pushing for. The review should be made available electronically and, for distribution in country, also in print. It should be published in the forms of an extended version and a brief.

¹⁰⁰ TCSP is currently producing country briefs. However, these are focusing on describing the current situation and FAO's engagement, rather than presenting an analytical perspective on opportunities and most binding constraints and most promising options. Obviously, where comprehensive analyses already exist, the policy intelligence system can build upon existing analyses. What the evaluation Team found in the country visits was the following situation: What is typically available are comprehensive *descriptions* of the food and agricultural sector, and such descriptions are also included in the national food security strategies promoted by FAO. In many countries, the CAADP process has led to the production of analytical studies on investment opportunities based on modelling, mostly conducted by IFPRI. However, what is needed is a critical review of available studies taking the policy context (see next point) into account.

¹⁰¹ In this respect, it would be useful to make all analytical work conducted at the country level by the ES Divisions on a website to make it more accessible.

¹⁰² It is worth noting that a substantial process of capacity development and quality assurance will be required to lift CPF quality and relevance. Moreover, CPFs should also take into account the planning cycles of major international financial institutions as well as the UNDAF cycle.

The promising current efforts to monitor policies under MAFAP, MAfFS and FAPDA (see above) could become part of this country policy intelligence system.

302. ***A review of the policy context:*** As recommended in the 2008 Policy Assistance Paper, the country-level policy intelligence system should also include gathering key information on the key actors in the agricultural policy sector, their role, interests and capacity, the national policy climate, and the quality of the policy debate (including participation).¹⁰³ A thorough stakeholder analysis will be required to collect this information. This effort has also to assess the role of stakeholders with which FAO generally has limited interaction, such as the parliamentary committees dealing with agriculture. As some of the information on the policy context might be politically sensitive, this component of the country-level policy intelligence system does not necessarily have to be externally published and widely distributed; it could rather be used internally for the planning of FAO's policy assistance, including for its assessment of the political feasibility of different policy and institutional reform options that FAO might engage with. In this analysis, the identification of "policy windows", that is windows of opportunities for policy change is important, as well. This component is captured by the "preparedness" aspect in the proposed policy intelligence and preparedness system, which could help to improve the timeliness of FAO's policy support.

6.4.2 *Measure 2: Define country-specific impact pathways and results for policy assistance*

303. Based on the country policy intelligence and preparedness system, FAO should formulate country-specific intended impacts and corresponding impact pathways for its policy assistance. The formulation of these impact pathways, which have to include policy outputs, outcomes, results, should be part of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) process. The intended impact should have a strong buy-in from the government and be aligned with priorities set forth in the FAO Regional Conference, as well as taking into consideration FAO's global priorities, and the priorities identified by the UN Country Team for the UN country programme. Within FAO's results-based management system, FAO should then define *impact-oriented results* of its policy work.¹⁰⁴ For example, the current Indicator 2 for Organizational Result H1 in the Medium Term Plan reads: "Number of countries and REIOs that have implemented sectoral and cross-sectoral food security policies, strategies and programmes (including NPFS/RPFS)." At the country-level, formulation of policy assistance results can be linked to such overall goals, but they have to be more specific and impact-oriented. They should focus on concrete policy or institutional changes that address most binding constraints or use unique opportunities that will contribute to food security, as identified in the analysis. These most binding constraints or unique opportunities may well lie in a particular sub-sector, e.g., in the reform of the agricultural extension system or in the removal of a regulatory barrier. Here, FAO has the special (largely unrivalled) opportunity to rely on the expertise of its respective departments.

6.4.3 *Measure 3: Strengthen the accountability for policy assistance impact through incentives, performance management involving the Regional Conferences and FAOREps*

¹⁰³ Experience in fisheries (and aquaculture), for example, suggests that the principal constraint to urgent policy reform is not necessarily a lack of analysis of policy options. Current policies may be greatly inadequate, and recognized as such, but the challenges to transit to more sustainable and economically rewarding long-term policies are significant and transition costs high. The trade-offs for political decision-makers are often not in favour of seeking the longer-term outcome. The kind of interventions needed to change payoffs should feature in future strategic programming work.

¹⁰⁴ The Team was surprised to receive a comment indicating that there could be no "policy results" in FAO's current results-based management system and terminology, only country-specific "policy outputs" that would refer to intended improvements in policy formulation/implementation. If this is indeed the case, the Team recommends reconsidering the approach used, against the background of an impact chain assessment.

304. As indicated above, there is a need to strengthen accountability for the delivery of policy assistance results at the country level. Under the current decentralized system, the main responsibilities for the country policy assistance lie with the country, subregional and regional offices. The proposed country policy intelligence and preparedness system and the formulation of country-specific policy impact pathways and policy assistance results will certainly improve the possibilities to hold the decentralized offices accountable for improved country-level policy assistance. However, there is obviously a need to create *stronger incentives* for delivering high-quality policy assistance at the country level. Since the reporting line of the decentralized offices runs through the ADG/RRs to the DDG-Operations, it is suggested that FAO identify strategies for improving the incentives within this reporting line.¹⁰⁵
305. Possible mechanisms include the development of *performance indicators* for policy assistance, a stronger consideration of policy assistance results in the performance assessment process of staff, and mechanisms that link the allocation of funding more directly to achieving policy assistance results.
306. In line with the general considerations on decentralization (Box 5), there is also a need for a stronger role of the Regional Conferences in monitoring policy assistance results, since the Regional Conferences, as the “political decentralization” body needs to play an important role in holding FAO’s decentralized offices into account. FAO should, therefore, make a pro-active attempt to prioritize its policy work not only through the CPF, but also through the Regional Conferences processes. For example, FAO could submit to each Regional Conference a reasoned strategy for policy assistance, capacity development as well as intended impacts and impact pathways for the countries in the respective region. FAO should then report in each Regional Conference on its progress and achievements in this respect. In line with the considerations on linking political, administrative and fiscal decentralization (Box 5), the authority to make decisions on the budget for the policy work is an essential element for creating accountability.
307. The strengthening of the accountability of the FAOREps for policy work also needs to be an essential element in the proposed approach. In view of the “capture” problem indicated above, this is obviously a challenging task. However, as the IEE findings indicate, the need to improve the profile and accountability of FAOREps is not limited to FAO’s policy work. Still, from a policy perspective, it will be essential to clearly include policy into the functions of the FAOREps, and to make this function subject to the performance assessments and career incentives of FAOREps (see **Recommendation 2**). Obviously, the FAOREps need to play a key role in the impact pathways for FAO’s policy work. At the same time, FAO needs to improve its policy assistance and backstopping to the FAOREps, as is further discussed below.
308. A stronger accountability of the decentralized office network for delivering policy assistance at the country level will reduce the incentives to use policy officers for administrative work. At the same time, it may increase the incentives of those policy officers to draw on the policy expertise in the policy divisions at Headquarters, even if there is no administrative requirement to do so any longer. As further discussed below, FAO should also consider mechanisms by which the ADG of the ES Department can be involved in the accountability mechanism for country-level policy assistance.

6.4.4 Measure 4: Develop a system to monitor the impact of policy assistance at country level

¹⁰⁵ Some opportunities in the current results-based management system might be used more strategically in this respect. For example, the ADG-ES is the Strategic Team Leader of Strategic Objective H, in which TCS work on support to countries is also represented.”

309. A stronger focus on the impact of FAO's policy assistance at country level is essential to address the underlying problems in this area. This requires also a change towards an "impact culture" in FAO. As indicated above, creating an impact monitoring system requires the definition of impact chains by which FAO's policy assistance work will contribute to the Organization's ultimate goals and the documentation of FAO's efforts along this impact chain. The attribution problems of policy impact are well known, but they should not be used as a reason to shy away from efforts to assess FAO's role in achieving policy impact. Staff interviews indicate considerable resistance among some staff against going in this direction. The evaluation feels, however, that it would be good to bring staff on-board and create an "impact culture", as indicated in **Recommendation 3**. The experience of other organizations, especially IFPRI, might be helpful in this regard. Impact monitoring may not only help FAO to increase its performance in policy assistance, it will also be useful for resource mobilization in the future.
310. Implementing these measures will certainly require a learning process within the Organization, even though FAO can draw on substantial experience. Strategically selecting a set of **pilot countries** where these measures are being developed seems to this evaluation to be the best way to go. It would be useful to select countries that have priority from a food-security perspective, but that also represent different types of political systems and government capacity, since the approaches needed to implement these measures may differ considerably across countries.

6.5 Options for the reform of FAO's institutional set-up for policy

311. The four measures to create accountability recommended above are a prerequisite to address the performance problems identified in this evaluation, but they are not sufficient. It is essential for FAO to address the problems in the institutional set-up identified above, in particular the problems of horizontal and vertical fragmentation. After carefully assessing all reform options and intensive discussions with the Expert Panel, the Team concluded that FAO will not be able to address its long-standing problems in country-level policy assistance without addressing its horizontal and vertical fragmentation problem through a limited, but strategic restructuring (**Recommendation 2**).
312. Table 11 provides an overview of institutional reform options and lists their main advantages and disadvantages as well as an assessment by the Team. Along with the new options proposed by this evaluation, the table includes Recommendation 6.9 of the IEE (see Chapter 4) as well as the three options discussed in the 2008 Policy Assistance Paper.
313. One of the most far-reaching recommendations regarding the change of organizational units in past evaluations is the option proposed in the 2008 Policy Assistance Paper to create a Policy Centre which would merge all policy units in the ES and TC Departments. This version of the Policy Centre Option corresponds to IEE Recommendation 6.9, which proposed the creation of an Economic, Social and Development Policy and Programmes Department, led by an ADG who serves as a Chief Development Policy Officer. Another version of the Policy Centre Proposal in the 2008 Policy Assistance Paper even went beyond this suggestion and proposed the inclusion of the policy units located in technical departments (AGAL, FOE, FIP, TCER) as well. This is the most-far reaching institutional change among all proposals, and it would have the advantage to end the horizontal fragmentation of policy work in FAO. However, for the following reasons, this evaluation does not endorse these far-reaching proposals for institutional change.
- First, the potential resistance and the transaction costs of pursuing such far-reaching change, in addition to the already ongoing reform process, seem prohibitively high.

- Second, the proposal does not solve the problem of vertical fragmentation created through the decentralization process, unless the policy officers located in regional and subregional offices become part of this Policy Centre as well. Such a big unit would be difficult to manage, and it would not fit into FAO's organizational structure.
 - Third, even if such a unit is modelled after the Investment Center, it might not be subject to the same incentives that make the Investment Centre effective in spite of its size. As is well known, TCI is subject to strong accountability mechanisms created by its donors as it relies on outside funding.
 - Fourth, the Team did not find evidence that removing the sub-sector specific policy units (AGAL, FOE, FIP, and TCER) from their respective departments would improve FAO's policy work. The evidence reported in Chapter 5 rather suggests that units need to play an important role in further "mainstreaming" policy work in the respective technical areas, for example, by promoting the economic, institutional and social assessment of different policy options. This is likely to be achieved easier if they are part of their respective Departments.
314. This evaluation also does not endorse the creation of a Policy Unit, which was proposed as one possible option in the 2008 Policy Assistance Paper. While having merits, this option is likely to further increase the institutional fragmentation of FAO's policy work. It would be likely to work mostly through extra-budgetary resources, and thus contribute little to making the core of FAO's policy work more effective.
315. The evaluation does, however, recommend that FAO reduce the horizontal fragmentation of FAO's policy work by a more limited institutional change at Headquarters level. In particular, it is recommended to shift the Policy Assistance Service and the Food Security Service partly to the ES Department and, as further discussed below, partly to the decentralized offices (**Recommendation 2**). This option will reduce the duplication of work, such as the parallel promotion of national food security strategies and general agricultural development strategies, or the parallel monitoring of respective activities. It will also improve the possibilities for creating the recommended policy intelligence and preparedness system, and allows for a better use of human resources in support of country level policy assistance. Moreover, this change reduces at the same time the extent of both vertical and horizontal fragmentation in FAO's structure.
316. Assuming that it is not easily possible to create additional positions for policy work from the regular budget, it is also suggested to strengthen the capacity for policy assistance in the decentralized offices by shifting positions from the Policy Assistance and the Food Security Service Divisions to the decentralized level. The goal of this recommended shift is to increase the capacity for policy assistance at country level, considering that currently, the policy officers in decentralized offices have a far too large number of countries to backstop.
317. The appropriate level of decentralization to which resources should be shifted needs further assessment, based on the considerations presented in Box 5. In the current decentralization approach, the level at which policy assistance is located is the subregional level. However, this level has some challenges. In the logic of FAO's own decentralization rationale, they are not consistently associated with subregional organizations, hence their corresponding "client system" is not clear. Building capacity at the regional level would have the advantage of establishing a "critical mass" with all the associated professional benefits for exchange and quality assurance. Sending policy officers to selected high-priority countries would have the advantage of a close collaboration with the government, stakeholders and donors, and the possibilities to create accountability for country-level policy advice and achieve impact might be highest. The team recommends considering a case-by-case decision since a one-size-fits-all approach might not be the best strategy.

318. The Team emphasizes that shifting policy officer positions to decentralized offices needs to be accompanied with parallel measures to increase the accountability for country policy assistance, to reduce the incentives for the “capture” of this staff for other purposes, and to put proper mechanisms in place to ensure quality control of the policy work. Simply shifting more policy staff to decentralized offices without addressing the underlying causes of poor performance in country policy assistance will only exaggerate the existing problems.

319. With regard to the nutrition Division, this evaluation has no objections against the recommendations of the recent Nutrition Evaluation to move of the policy work on nutrition into the ES Department. While this evaluation did not examine the nutrition policy work in detail because of the already ongoing Nutrition Evaluation, the Team noted that that FAO's general policy work on food security and agricultural development, especially at the country level, would benefit from a stronger focus on nutrition. Likewise, FAO's global policy role would benefit from more visible global policy work on nutrition.

Table 11: Institutional reform options

Type of institutional reform	Advantages	Disadvantages	Assessment by the Team
<i>1) Reform options to address fragmentation</i>			
1.1) Creation of an “ Economic, Social and Development Policy and Programmes Department ” as development policy analysis centre of FAO under an ADG, (Chief Development Policy Officer), integrating all of ES with the Policy Assistance Support Service, AGS, and extension, training and research under a new division structure (as proposed by IEE recommendation 6.9) or	Far-reaching reduction of horizontal fragmentation Creating of a unified line of accountability for policy work at Headquarters Makes it possible to better prioritize, coordinate, use synergies and avoid duplications Could raise FAO's international profile in policy work	High internal resistance to be expected Very high transaction costs of restructuring; Does not address the problem of vertical fragmentation : accountability for country/regional policy assistance remains under ADG/RRs – DDG Operations, even if the Policy Assistance Support Service is moved to ES	In its entirety not recommended for further consideration; however, elements recommended (see below)
1.2) Creation of a Policy Centre which may go beyond the IEE Rec. 6.9 and include the policy units of the technical departments, to be modelled after the Investment Centre, internal structure either with regional units or replicating the technical departments (as one option proposed by 2008 Policy Assistance Paper)	As above; inclusion of policy departments from technical units provides additional opportunities for integration of policy work; if internal structure according to regional units is selected, additional options to provide backstopping to country and regional work	Internal resistance and transaction costs of restructuring even higher if policy units of technical departments are included, as well; separation of sub-sectoral policy work from technical departments may reduce relevance and quality and also reduce opportunities for mainstreaming policy into technical work; vertical fragmentation problem not addressed, unless RO/SRO staff also becomes part of the Policy Centre	Not recommended for further consideration, however, Functional Technical Networks (see below) proposed as alternative

Type of institutional reform	Advantages	Disadvantages	Assessment by the Team
1.3) Creation of a Policy Unit (as one option proposed by 2008 Policy Assistance Paper)	Promotes collaboration across departments and disciplines Does not invoke resistance	Relies on extra-budgetary funding; increases institutional fragmentation	Not recommended because an additional unit will increase fragmentation
1.4) Consolidation of policy work within TC : Merger of Policy Assistance and the Food Security Support Services	Avoidance of duplication in view of overlap between the two fields	Offers only limited possibilities to reduce vertical fragmentation	Recommended in combination with moving the two services to the ES Department and shifting positions to decentralized offices (see below)
1.5) Shifting nutrition policy work into ES (as proposed by the recent Nutrition Evaluation)	Better integration of nutrition aspects in food security work; nutrition policy work may also benefit from ES leadership in global policy debates	Possible internal resistance; weakening of links between nutrition and food safety	Recommended for further consideration
1.6) Strengthening the capacity for policy assistance at the decentralized (regional or subregional) offices by moving positions from the Policy Assistance and the Food Security Support Services to Sub-regional Offices.	Improving policy support to FAOREps at country level; improved possibility of FAO to engage in policy debates and achieve results	Likely internal resistance ; more “capture” of policy officers for other tasks than policy assistance if accompanying measures for increased accountability are not pursued; at SRO level “client system” not clear, and possibility to create critical mass limited.	Recommended in combination with shift of Policy Assistance Support and Food Security Support Services to ES Department and measures to increase accountability for policy assistance at country level; Case-by-case decision recommended on appropriate level (see also 1.7 below).
1.7) Placing policy officers in high-priority countries (instead of placing more policy officers in SROs or ROs) by shifting positions from Policy Assistance and the Food Security Support Services	Direct interaction of policy officers with country governments and stakeholders, including donor groups; improved possibilities for accountability and impact	Not in line with current decentralization policy that focuses on SROs; Limited possibility to use economies of scale and create critical mass.	Recommended for consideration on a case-by-case basis in combination with measures above.
2) Institutional reform options to improve coordination			
2.1) Policy Task Force (as one option recommended in 2008 Policy Assistance Paper)	Flexible arrangement that allows identifying corporate priorities for policy work Promotes collaboration across disciplines	Limited possibility to create more accountability for country and regional policy work; Need to concentrate on selected issues	Recommended to consider Functional Technical Networks and issue-specific informal networks as alternative (see below)
2.2) Creation of Functional Technical Networks assigned to Sub-Regions or selected high-priority countries	Fits into proposed new structure (recent circular) Creates strong backstopping opportunity and coordination for country-level and regional policy assistance	New structure, might be difficult to “fill with life” and create appropriate incentives for staff to participate	Recommended for testing on a pilot basis
2.3) Strengthening of issue-specific informal networks	Allows for flexibility, especially in addressing	Depends on initiative of staff within policy	Recommended

Type of institutional reform	Advantages	Disadvantages	Assessment by the Team
	emerging topics	units	
2.4) Designation of the ADG of ES as Chief Development Policy Officer and assigning him additional responsibility for country and regional policy assistance; may involve coordination of Functional Technical Networks for Sub-Regions)	Bridging the divide between policy analysis and policy assistance without major restructuring; improving quality control of country level assistance	Matrix management that is not in line with current management and reporting structures	Not recommended since options to make this arrangement work seem limited; shifting of Policy Assistance and Food Security Support Services to ES Dept. and decentralized offices recommended as an alternative
2.5) Requiring staff from HQ Divisions to "sell" a specified share of their time to country policy assistance activities	Creating stronger linkages between normative work and country policy assistance	May detract resources from global policy work	Recommended
3) Institutional reform options to strengthen demand and accountability for policy work			
Strengthen discretionary authority over the budget for country-level policy assistance work to Regional Conferences and FAOREps	Creating a more effective mechanism to identify demand for country-level and regional policy assistance work and for creating accountability	Assigning authority to FAOREps only useful in connection with reform of FAORep recruitment;	Recommended for further consideration

320. Table 11 also lists a number of options that aim to address the problem of fragmentation of policy work through better coordination. The 2008 Policy Assistance Paper recommended a Policy Task Force as an "interdepartmental mechanism gathering ADGs of the various Departments conducting policy work, chaired by the Deputy Director General and assisted by a Support Group of which senior representatives from various divisions conducting policy work are members." This Task Force would have pluridisciplinary working groups with staff from different divisions, placed under the leadership of the best placed "lead unit." (FAO, 2008: 26). In essence, this suggestion proposes the set-up of a coordination structure that runs across the departmental and divisional structure, and reflects the recommendation for such a Task Force made in the 2001 Evaluation of Policy Assistance. This option certainly has the advantage of providing a coordination mechanism to address the problem of horizontal fragmentation at Headquarter level.

321. However, this evaluation found that the coordination among policy units at Headquarter level is not the major problem; the major problem rather is that the expertise of FAO in these different units does not come together for providing country-level policy advice. Therefore, this evaluation proposes an alternative coordination mechanism, which is in line with the recent FAO *Circular on Responsibilities and Relationships* (FAO, April 2011): The creation of formalized Functional Technical Networks (FTNs). It is suggested that FAO considers the creation of FTNs that focus on policy advice in subregions and/or in selected high-priority countries, and that have the goal to bundle the expertise in the different policy units of FAO that is relevant for the respective subregion or country, so as to make this expertise more accessible for policy assistance. The FTNs should have clear responsibilities and deliverables that are linked to the impact chains highlighted above, which may include support to the country policy intelligence system proposed above. Where the lead unit of these FTNs is located may differ, depending on capacity and expertise. The evaluation team does not propose a "superstructure" to coordinate these subregion-specific policy FTNs through a central unit, because this could involve high costs and risk confusing lines of authority and responsibility. Moreover, wherever possible, less formal mechanisms to share information within communities of practices (e.g., policy analysts and economists) should be promoted as an alternative to formalized structures.

322. As an option to promote coordination across the different policy units at HQ, one could also consider the creation of issue-specific policy networks, which may have a more informal character, and have had some success in the past. They can build on the experience of interdepartmental working groups (e.g., the IDWG on biotechnology) and other informal arrangements. The evaluation found that such informal structures have a considerable potential to bridge organizational divides without imposing an additional bureaucratic structure. Issues to be dealt with in such networks may include, for example, policy monitoring, policy impact assessment, gender-mainstreaming in policy work, nutrition-sensitive policy-making, and policies for climate-smart agriculture.
323. FAO may also consider an option to create the role of a “Chief Policy Development Officer” in the Organization. The rationale for this option is to take up the idea of the IEE to have one main focal point with overall responsibility, without, however, undertaking the far-reaching institutional restructuring proposed by the IEE (see above). In the existing structure, the most obvious position to be assigned this role is the ADG in charge of the Economic and Social Department. The question is whether there are any mechanisms available to FAO by which this position can be involved in creating more accountability for policy assistance work, especially for the country and regional policy assistance (see above). One could imagine some matrix management-type of arrangement, by which the Chief Development Policy Officer is involved in the work planning and the performance review of policy-related work conducted in decentralized offices. Based on staff feedback, the Evaluation Team has doubts that this option might indeed be feasible and therefore recommends as a more viable alternative the shift of the Policy Assistance and the Food Security Support Service to the ES Department and to decentralized offices.
324. Another option to strengthen the capacity for policy assistance at country and regional level is a rule that would request staff from the policy divisions at headquarters to “sell” a specified share of their time to country or regional policy assistance work (Table 11). To some extent, this is already happening, but a more extensive use of this instrument is recommended by this evaluation.
325. Table 11 also lists the institutional options that can help to create accountability. As discussed above, using financial mechanisms is a strong instrument that can accompany other managerial approaches. Apart from strengthening the discretionary authority of the Regional Conferences to make decisions on budgets for policy work, one might also consider increasing the authority of the FAOReps in making decisions regarding the budget for policy work. This mirrors the strategy that the World Bank applies by assigning considerable authority to the Country Director. The Team recommends considering this option, but only in connection with a reform of the recruitment procedures and the incentive system for FAOReps. In the World Bank, the position of the Country Director is subject to strong career incentives for performance, which is currently not the case for FAOReps. However, as pointed out above, the evaluation strongly recommends strengthening the policy function of the FAORep (see **Recommendation 2**).

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 General reflections on FAO's policy work

326. It did not take this evaluation to find that the world is a messy one, complex, globalizing, and changing in many ways. Or that the international institutions invented to try to make the world less messy, through provision of cogent global, international, national and more local public goods are necessarily complex and changing, and thus inevitably somewhat messy themselves. One such institution created in the terminal phases of World War II is the FAO of the UN, with mandate refined by Members in 1999 in the *Strategic Framework for FAO 2000-2015* in a way that can be paraphrased as striving for improved food security, reduced rural poverty, and increased well-being of the population of developing countries, while promoting environmental quality and resource sustainability. Much of what FAO does in delivering on this challenging mandate has a policy dimension, and that diverse work is the subject of this evaluation.

327. This year of 2011 has been an interesting one to observe messiness around the world. For instance, the drought situation in the Horn of Africa (HoA) during the completion of this evaluation starkly demonstrates the messy challenges that are confronted by FAO. Many agencies are naturally involved but the role of FAO is central, as well documented in the regularly issued (e.g., 22 Sept. 2011) on-line *HoA Executive Briefs* and other pieces reported on the *FAO Crisis in the HoA* webpage. The inherent complexity and diversity of country situations implies that there is unlikely to be a few simple truths to be discovered by anyone, and thus parallel effort is likely justified in the search for betterment; no one knowledge supplier is all-knowing and multiple sources of advice are inevitably going to be superior to anything from a single supplier in the food and agriculture policy knowledge-management business. But FAO is one of the most important actors in this field, and this evaluation has had the privilege of attempting to assess how well it has been performing, and seeking to identify how it may do better in the future.

328. As noted in chapter 1, this evaluation is in part conceived as a follow-up to the OED evaluation presented to the Programme Committee in May 2001, and it is in many ways, including the general approach taken (PC85/4 para 12), and indeed in reaffirming many of the findings of that evaluation, including “that policy development is an area of continued high priority for all member countries ... and that policy work should be expanded” (PC85/4 para 74). Similarly, the IEE gave extensive attention to the topic because it found that policy work and capacity development were the two areas of greatest priority overall to Member countries (IEE 2007, para 514). It will thus come as no surprise that the present evaluation concludes that there is a strong and continuing need for policy work of the type done by FAO. The reasons are several, as detailed in earlier chapters, and are not too surprising:

- FAO is well positioned to help most developing countries identify, adopt and implement policies that address hunger and malnutrition,¹⁰⁶ poverty and sustainability - FAO's three global goals;
- FAO is better suited than others for much such work (IFIs, IFPRI, bilaterals, etc.) because it enjoys unmatched trust, access and presence in all countries where such work is needed, as was vigorously expressed in the countries visited in and contacted by the evaluation;

¹⁰⁶ In drafting this chapter on the occasion of World Food Day 2011, one of the authors was reminded that it marked the 50th anniversary of his (surely indirect) personal engagement with the “hunger work” of FAO, as he served as a volunteer in collecting “contributions” from well-fed Queenslanders in support of the Freedom From Hunger Campaign. (The Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign (AFFHC) was a charity in Australia from 1961 to 1992, when it merged with Community Aid Abroad.)

- FAO has (according to many opinions expressed to the evaluation and also as judged by the Team itself) the technical knowledge in all fields of agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries that no other organization has in such breadth and depth.

7.2 Overview of findings on FAO's Policy Work

329. Notwithstanding these positive general evaluative judgments, the evaluation necessarily had to confront the question of whether FAO is using this potential effectively. The conclusion is: “not always”!
330. With regard to its policy work at the global level, the evaluation found that FAO has responded remarkably well to the challenge highlighted by the IEE to exercise global leadership in an “increasingly crowded field” and “to provide an authoritative, objective, respected and politically neutral international platform where ... central issues can be examined and decisions taken for collective action.” (IEE, 2007, pp. 35-36). Examples of FAO's global policy work that respond to this challenge include the SOFA reports since 2004, FAO's work on “climate-smart agriculture”, its work on global perspectives and trade, and the global policy instruments such as voluntary guidelines and codes of conduct promoted departments in charge of crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and natural resources.
331. The evaluation found that there is a stark contrast between the policy performance at the global level and FAO's performance in delivering policy assistance at the country level. In this respect, the evaluation found that FAO is far away from its own goal to have a “strong and responsive country-office-centered network that provides timely and effective services by drawing on the full range of technical expertise in FAO, its Members and Partners.” (2011 FAO Circular on Relationships and Responsibilities). The reasons for the performance problems at country level are several:
- Demand for FAO policy work from ministries of agriculture is patchy. As did the IEE, the evaluation country visits found that FAO's work in policy was a high priority for nearly all countries, except some larger middle-income countries, especially of Latin America. These few countries considered that FAO did not have expertise sufficiently greater than their own, and that they already had a proliferation of policy advice, so the opportunities for FAO to provide useful support in policy analysis and formulation were judged to be limited. Instead, they were interested in assistance with policy implementation.
 - At the country level FAO is geared to respond to demand from the Ministry of Agriculture; effective demand from that source will be limited in those countries that regard policy-making as “sovereign territory,” particularly for broad-brush agricultural policy work or for potentially sensitive policy issues. Though there are not many countries with this attitude, where it occurs it can be a serious constraint to FAO engagement, especially if the issues that are most deserving of analytical support transcend what is agreed in the scope of a Country Programming Framework (CPF). The evaluation feels that in such instances, FAO needs to make efforts to create the potentially socially advantageous demand – perhaps ideally by demonstrating that good policy work helps a government achieve its own goals. Since the FAO mandate goes beyond that of most ministries of agriculture, the Organization must develop mechanisms that help it reach out to and to respond effectively to demands from other ministries and national and regional bodies whose mandates intersect with that of FAO.
332. Even in countries where there is demand (e.g., Rwanda, DRC, Myanmar, Balkan countries, etc.), FAO is not always well set up to respond to this demand. Again, the reasons vary greatly:
- Fragmentation of policy work within FAO (horizontally and vertically) results in low accountability of the Organization for delivering high-quality policy assistance at country level.

- As a consequence, human and financial resources are not organized in a way that allows FAO to respond consistently.
- This results in an inability to respond in a timely manner;
- Moreover, the response is not always appropriate due to lack of economic, institutional and social analysis in sub-sectoral policy; lack of analytical agricultural sector reviews to provide a basis for response, and weak facilitation;
- Uneven quality of consultants and of backstopping is also a problem.
- FAO focuses on producing policy documents (that may never be truly implemented even though their production requires considerable resources) rather than being strategic in identifying and addressing binding constraints or using specific opportunities for food security and agricultural development.

333. On the human resource side, having policy posts filled by staff members without a cogent policy background, perhaps after being reassigned from a specific technical post, may explain the less than ideal situation encountered in some country offices. Moreover, it was observed that policy officers, who are perceived as generalists, are often used by decentralized offices for administrative work, thus diminishing their potential to back-stop country policy work—a problem identified as “capture.”

334. Considerations such as the above, elaborated in chapters 3, 5 and 6, lead to a series of recommendations set out in the following section.

7.3 Recommendations

7.3.1 Priority setting and strategic management of FAO policy work

335. With regard to priority setting and strategic management of FAO's policy work, the evaluation arrived at the following recommendations.

336. **Recommendation 1.1: FAO should protect the excellent policy work conducted at global level.** During the past decade, FAO has made significant investments in its global policy work. As a consequence, it has been able to regain global leadership in important policy debates on food security and agriculture and to provide a respected international platform where important decisions can be made by the global community. Examples of important global public goods produced by FAO's policy work include its flagship publications on the State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA), and the State of Food Insecurity (SOFI), FAO's Global Perspectives work, and the global policy instruments it promotes, such as voluntary guidelines and codes of conduct. FAO needs to protect this important global policy work to ensure that the Organization can maintain the high quality standards it has achieved in these fields. In this context FAO should ensure that new flagship publications are subject to the same rigorous quality control and peer review procedures as the existing ones.

337. **Recommendation 1.2: FAO needs to set clear priorities for its role in country-level policy assistance.** The evaluation found that FAO's policy assistance at the country level is confronted with major performance problems in spite of the high potential that FAO has for policy work at this level due to the trust and feeling of ownership that ministries of agriculture have in FAO as “their organization.” An important element in addressing this problem is priority-setting. FAO needs to focus on countries that need FAO policy assistance most, rather than presuming that FAO can do everything everywhere. FAO should focus on activities that have the highest impact on food-insecure people, taking FAO's capacity to deliver into account.

338. **Recommendation 1.3:** To guide FAO's priority-setting and strategic management of policy assistance, it is recommended that Management articulates a detailed vision and strategic approach, which is based on a thorough analysis of FAO's comparative advantage as a global organization as well as its mandate. This strategy needs to address a range of issues, including the following:

- a) It is important for FAO work on policy to clarify the limits of its responsibility and the means it should utilize to assist governments in promoting policy change that has the highest impact on addressing poverty, hunger and malnutrition and sustainability. To improve the impact of its policy work, FAO needs to engage with a range of ministries beyond the Ministries of Agriculture, a strategy that needs the full support from the highest level. In this regard, FAO also needs to find more effective ways to link with other organizations and stakeholders, including the UN family, to ensure that it can effectively promote the agriculture and food security agenda in national policy dialogues.
- b) In its country work FAO must fulfil the role of facilitator and present clearly analysed *options* based on documented research and international experience, tuned to well-assessed local conditions, from the political, and socio-economic, to the environmental.
- c) Strategy on policy support to countries needs to ensure that for different circumstances, different norms for response will apply, e.g., in emergency transition; in impoverished developing or in middle-income, FAO would respond differently to country requests for policy assistance. Also, when a strategy is developed it will need to ensure flexibility for the FAO Rep to use different policy tools or engage at different stages in the policy cycle in order to provide a timely and impact-oriented response.
- d) FAO will continue to have to walk a fine line between being trusted friendly adviser and honest protector of the greater global public good; it seems that greater awareness of how to meet this challenge with maximal professional integrity is needed.

339. A feature frequently noted by the evaluation was that, when FAO is directly involved in country policy formulation, this usually takes the form of hiring national or international consultants to produce a policy document. The evaluation found this approach to policy formulation to be one of the critical weaknesses of policy support, along with consequent poor dissemination and uptake of knowledge. While generous use is made of such terms as "government/stakeholder buy-in," "national ownership," "country-led," etc., the actual work of preparing a policy paper often falls on the outside "experts". The consultants are normally expected to consult widely including across disciplines, but their TORS generally do not stress capacity development as a primary output, nor require the institution being supported to produce the policy itself. For instance, SRO Policy officers in charge of specific countries should, but were not found to regularly interact with the policy analysts from other institutions doing analytical work in those countries (WB, IFPRI, national universities, etc.). A tendency to carry out, or get consultants to carry out, the formulation is, of course, not confined to FAO. But the future need not be like the past just because in the past the future was like the past, and the evaluation thus suggests the following additional recommendations:

340. **Recommendation 1.4:** FAO can and should play a leading role in changing the way that policy formulation support is provided, particularly through a better analytical basis and a more strategic and more stakeholder-participatory facilitation, and with on-going engagement of its consultants and staff, so that there is greater country ownership and consequently a better chance of policies being sustainably implemented. Moreover, as further addressed in Recommendation 2.1 (c), FAO needs to strengthen the role and capacity of the FAORep for country-level policy work (a recommendation that has been made as early as 1989, but has not been implemented since then).

7.3.2 Improving accountability for country-level policy assistance and addressing the institutional fragmentation of FAO's policy work

341. The evaluation concluded that FAO's performance problems regarding its country-level policy work can only be addressed by adopting a twin-track approach of (a) improving accountability for country-level policy work while (b) at the same time addressing the problem of the institutional fragmentation of FAO's policy work. After analysing a range of possible options (Chapter 6), the evaluation Team arrived at the following recommendation:

342. **Recommendation 2.1: FAO needs to strengthen the accountability for the performance and impact of its country-level policy assistance, since this is a prerequisite for any other reform effort to work.** Four measures are recommended in this respect:

- a) Measure 1: Create a Policy Intelligence and Preparedness (PIP) system at the country level: As suggested earlier in FAO's Policy Assistance Paper and other FAO work on this topic, FAO should create a Policy Intelligence and Preparedness system that has two components: (1) a policy review of the agriculture, food and nutrition situation in the respective country with a strong analytical focus on identifying the most binding constraints and identifying the most promising opportunities for institutional and policy change to achieve food security, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability, and (b) a review of the policy context, including a stakeholder analysis and an analysis of relevant policy processes and policy windows.
- b) Measure 2: Define country-specific impact pathways and results for policy assistance: Based on the Policy Intelligence and Preparedness system, FAO should identify the impacts it wants to achieve with its policy work, and it should define the corresponding impact pathways for its policy assistance. The formulation of these impact pathways should be part of the Country Programming Framework (CPF) process and provide the basis for formulating country-specific results for policy assistance in FAO's Results-Based Management System.
- c) Measure 3: Strengthen the accountability for policy assistance impact through incentives and performance management involving the Regional Conferences and FAOREps: This measure has several components:
 - Since the reporting line of the decentralized offices runs through the ADG/RRs to the DDG-Operations, it is suggested that FAO identify strategies for improving the incentives for providing high-quality assistance within this reporting line. Possible mechanisms include the development of performance indicators for policy assistance, a stronger consideration of policy assistance results in the performance assessment process of staff, and mechanisms that link the allocation of funding more directly to achieving policy assistance results.
 - There is also a need for a stronger role of the Regional Conferences in monitoring policy assistance results and FAO should make a pro-active attempt to prioritize its policy work through the Regional Conferences processes.
 - Moreover, FAO needs to clearly include policy dialogue with the government into the functions of the FAOREps, and to make this function subject to the performance assessments and career incentives of FAOREps. Accordingly, FAOREps should be effective facilitators, and, very importantly, they should have significant expertise in policy support. The appointment strategy should be adjusted to reach this goal. At the same time, FAO needs to improve its capacity to provide policy assistance and backstopping to FAOREps (see Recommendation 2.2).
 - In connection with reform efforts that aim at strengthening accountability for policy work, FAO should also consider the shifting more discretionary authority over funding resources to Regional Conferences and FAOREps, following the idea of "fiscal decentralization." This measure should only be implemented in combination with the use of performance indicators and policy impact assessment as well as

measures for strengthening the capacity of Regional Conferences and FAOREps to engage in policy work.

- d) Measure 4: Develop a system to monitor the impact of policy assistance at country level: As further specified in Recommendation 3, FAO needs to create a system of monitoring and evaluating the impact of its policy work.

343. **Recommendation 2.2: FAO needs to address the horizontal and vertical fragmentation of policy work in its institutional structure.** After carefully considering the costs involved in restructuring, the evaluation Team came to the conclusion that the most promising option to address the long-standing fragmentation problem consists in the following measures:

- d) In order to **consolidate its policy work and at the same time increase the capacity for policy assistance at the country level** using existing resources, the Policy Assistance and Food Security Support Services (TCSP and TCSF) should partly be shifted to the ES Department, and partly to decentralized offices. The evaluation Team came to this conclusion after carefully considering a broad range of alternative options (see Chapter 6). This recommendation is best implemented as part of the already currently ongoing reform process, and it needs to be combined with the implementation of Recommendation 2.2 to be effective. The level of decentralization at which additional capacity for policy assistance should be created (regional, subregional or selected priority countries) needs to be carefully decided on a case-by-case basis, since a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for decentralizing policy work, as discussed in Chapter 6.
- e) To support the policy assistance work at the country level, FAO should experiment with the creation of formal **Functional Technical Networks (FTNs) or alternative informal structures** that focus on policy advice in subregions and/or in selected high-priority countries, and that have the goal to bundle the expertise in the different policy units of FAO that is relevant for the respective subregion or country, so as to make this expertise more accessible for policy assistance.
- f) To further reduce vertical fragmentation and improve analytical policy work at the country level, FAO should implement a policy of **requiring staff in policy units at HQ to “sell” a specified share of their time to country policy assistance activities**. Specifically HQ staff should be encouraged to focus on a set of countries or a region over a sustained number of years in order to build their context-specific knowledge and networks and to ensure that initiatives that need to be built around long term capacity development are followed through.

7.3.3 A cultural shift towards impact assessment

344. Due to its strategic nature and the need to review a large number of countries and decentralised offices, this evaluation was not well set up to explore formally or quantitatively the country level *impact* of FAO policy work. To attempt such would have involved working for longer periods in only a small number of case-study countries and would have raised issues of representativeness of any findings. Previous evaluations have documented some impacts (especially the 2001 policy support evaluation, which was the main source of such evidence for the IEE). The present evaluation reported several cases of strong impact being apparent (Chapter 5) but has not been able to document impact in a systematic way.

345. Sponsoring agencies of development organizations have had a long-standing concern for the relevance and effectiveness of development efforts generally, and agricultural and food policy research in particular; in short, the accountability aspect of impact assessment work. Development organizations themselves have also been devoting increasing attention to these issues for reasons of formalized learning and trying to do better; in short, the knowledge

enhancement aspect. More generally, the typical rationale for doing impact-assessment work consists of:

- Showing how policy work, capacity strengthening, and communications programs contribute to an organization's mission of reducing hunger and malnutrition in developing countries;
- Achieving improved accountability within FAO, to its members and to investors who support such work;
- Enhancing the credibility of the implementing organization;
- Improving quality and effectiveness of policy work;
- Ensuring continuing relevance of such work; and
- Promoting strategic thinking, and fostering a culture of impact awareness in a "learning organization".

346. This evaluation is convinced of the relevance and virtues of these good intentions that increasingly drive attention to such effort, although to this point in a relatively minor way in FAO. This meant, unfortunately, that there was not an abundance of internal (self-evaluation or other) material on the impact of policy work available to the evaluation. Could this have been different? In recent years the CGIAR, to take a system co-sponsored by FAO, and one that conducts much food and agricultural policy work, has vigorously addressed the provision of evidence of impact. After rather patchy efforts at impact assessment in individual Centres, the CGIAR then Science Council launched its Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), which has been supported by two full-time staff in the now Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC) secretariat hosted by FAO in Rome.¹⁰⁷ A growing body of impact studies is now available (e.g., Behrman 2007) to document achievements in policy work, and thus to reassure investors in such work of the high social value that can be generated, as well as to instruct management and staff how to work to good effect.¹⁰⁸

347. Encouragingly in FAO itself, various efforts have started in recent years, e.g., in Climate Change a toolbox is being developed based on the work in Morocco. OEK has developed Impact Assessment tools and courses for large food-security programmes. And there are other initiatives, too. So, practice and awareness are growing in the House, but thus far too little has been done, especially on FAO projects per se, although it appears that more such work is planned.¹⁰⁹ The less than ideal extent of attention seems to emerge from the way the Results-based approach is articulated and interpreted. Results-based Management (RBM), was explained in the 2009 Progress Report on IPA [CoC-IEE Report 2009, Appendix 5 para 11]: "...the overarching objective of FAO reform is to transform the Organization into one that manages for results. This requires successful completion of two elements – the clear articulation of member objectives and, within this context, the delivery of measurable results with clear impact." More recent overview is available in the FAO PWB 2012-13 (FAO 2011, p. 10), where the emphasis is on "outcomes" but there is no mention of impact assessment, which is explicitly mentioned only fleetingly in a later section (page 16, para 30), and for specific themes in the detailed programme (e.g., OR E2 for forests, OR G1 for smallholder food systems and OR H1 for food insecurity). Perhaps the limited specific attention goes back to the IEE, which

¹⁰⁷ <http://impact.cgiar.org/about>

¹⁰⁸ E.g., For a video discussion of IDRC and ODI experience, see http://www.ifpri.org/event/evidence-based-policy-making?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ifpri-impact-assessment+%28New+from+IFPRI+on+impact+assessment%29

¹⁰⁹ The clearest intentions are indicated in the PWB for 2012-13 (2011), pages 47 and 145.

suggested in its Recommendation 7.11¹¹⁰ that 0.3 percent of the Regular Budget should be provided for “periodic independent thematic impact assessment” but nowhere in its several hundred pages elaborated on this suggestion.

348. Accordingly, while recognizing that such work comes at quite some cost, the evaluation suggests that Management makes an effort to mainstream impact assessment into the policy work of the Organization. This can be best seen as an important aspect of self-evaluation, which arguably should be built into the budgets for at least the larger policy activities. Mechanisms need to be set in place to encourage self-evaluation more actively, such as through capturing cogent opinion and data during the annual Staff performance assessment. *Outcomes* are measures of the use made of the outputs by clients and partners, *policy influence* refers to the degree to which an output of policy work has influenced or reinforced a national or international policy, and finally, *impacts* are the effects that an influenced policy has on its beneficiaries, especially poor or food-insecure people. There are many challenges to such impact assessment work, most notably those relating to attribution. These same challenges also confront independent/external assessments of the type advocated by IEE. Based on these considerations, the evaluation recommends the following:

349. **Recommendation 3: FAO should create an “impact assessment culture”** with particular emphasis on assessing the impact of its country-level policy work. To implement this recommendation, all units doing policy work should be required to document evidence trails for impact assessment. Moreover, **OED should incorporate into its regular program at least three policy impact assessments per year**, focusing on case studies judged to have the best prospects for institutional learning and accountability.

7.3.4 *Dealing with uncertainty in FAO's policy work*

350. As the evaluation noted, a substantial share of FAO's policy work is related to phenomena that are intrinsically uncertain. It is not clear if the less-than-perfect world is becoming significantly riskier but it is evidently not becoming less so. Manifold uncertainties pervade the FAO policy-work space,¹¹¹ from impoverished consumers struggling with uncertain access to food at affordable prices and allocating scarce supplies of possibly dubious nutritional quality within households, to producers managing risks from regulations, markets, droughts and floods, and pests and diseases, to mention just a few. But the policy work itself does not always explicitly grapple with the uncertainties per se, e.g., through probabilistic modelling of aspects of climate change that are intrinsically uncertain.¹¹² The set of skills held by policy officers are

¹¹⁰ **Recommendation 7.11:** Evaluation Budget and Resources. Core evaluation plans approved by the Governing Bodies should be funded adequately. In line with best practice amongst the most mature evaluation services in the UN system, independent evaluation budget targets should be set at one percent of the Organization's Regular Budget for independent corporate evaluation, and 0.3 percent for periodic independent thematic impact assessments. (para 1217)

¹¹¹ To quote from an August Op-ed piece by José Graziano da Silva that was the most downloaded item from the FAO News site in September 2011, *Reducing Room for Uncertainty*: “The word *uncertainty* tops the agenda of our time and it is not going to lose this position very soon. This reflects the spread of a mood that the financial crisis has induced in politics and in everyone's daily lives, in which instability is the order of the day.” <http://www.rlc.fao.org/en/sala-prensa/opinion/reducing-room-for-uncertainty/>

¹¹² Suggestions for deeper FAO analysis of these uncertain aspects are made earlier in this report, particularly in the context of climate change. The impression of the Team is that greater attention to such analysis was more common in FAO in the decade preceding the evaluation period, reflected in FAO publications such as McConnell and Dillon (1997, especially chapter 11).

by no means uniform, and nor should they be; but cogent skills for analysing uncertainty appear to be sparse and underrepresented. Accordingly, a suggestion is:

351. **Recommendation 4: FAO managers of policy work consider the analytical capabilities of their staffs to identify gaps in skills that would be relevant in dealing more adequately with uncertainty in policy analysis and investment planning.** It is recommended that, if gaps are indeed prevalent as the evaluation hypothesizes, FAO identifies needed methods, and organizes appropriate training for Staff on appropriate methods. Alliances with other international organizations and national research institutes may prove to be effective for fruitful collaboration in this challenging dimension of policy work.

7.3.5 *Knowledge Uptake*

352. FAO rightly prides itself as managing one of the world's largest banks of agricultural knowledge and know-how and it is widely recognised for this, particularly through its websites for the different programmes, which are of varying quality but are all of relatively high standard. In the field of policy, FAO made remarkable efforts to make knowledge on policy globally available through its EASYPol system and through three policy monitoring initiatives (MAFAP, FAPDA, MAFFS).

353. Of particular concern to the evaluation is the relatively poor uptake of knowledge products that was evident in the field, and which has been noted in several past evaluations as well. Thus while FAO does appear to be making a real contribution in its role of harvesting and adapting available policy-relevant knowledge, there did not appear to be the necessary emphasis on knowledge sharing, communication and, especially, in ensuring uptake by those who need it most to be able to use it to influence national policies. However, more recently, FAO is engaging in innovative ways to address this problem, such as through the e-policy fora, like the online consultation on the Global Strategic Framework of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which closed as this report was being finalized. Such fora are providing opportunity for broad debate and inputs, and as well distance learning, and are being used to good effect. Accordingly, the suggestion of the evaluation is:

354. **Recommendation 5: FAO should continue to innovate in and expand the emphasis on its e-engagement efforts in order to extend its communications regarding policy** to reach to the world of a clientele that is increasingly well connected to the Internet, even if unfortunately not yet evenly. At the same time, FAO needs to invest in fostering uptake, e.g., in the capacity, especially of national level policy actors, to demand, access and use the policy material that is made available through websites. FAO should also consolidate its various efforts to provide tools for policy monitoring by using one common platform.

7.3.6 *Mainstreaming of policy in technical departments*

355. The evaluation observed (chapter 5) that the extant FAO culture does not view "policy as process", and consequently, does not view technical work as policy, and thus technical staff do not readily recognise the policy content and implications of their work. Moreover, technical staff is often working in isolation, frequently on numerous technical small-scale projects that still characterize the major part of FAO's country project portfolio, and are often not linked into the in-country policy processes. In the past, FAO has been able to promote remarkable country-level policy changes based on its technical work (e.g., the removal of subsidies for pesticides in Indonesia, which facilitated integrated pest management), but such opportunities are not systematically used. The evaluation Team also observed that direct policy support tends to place too much emphasis on producing a document, and too little emphasis on thorough analysis and facilitation; policy work is not focused enough on capacity development for policy; and weak

links prevail between technical solutions and broader enabling environment issues, thus leaving important opportunities for policy change unexploited and reducing the impact of FAO's engagement. Based on these observations, the evaluation recommends the following:

356. **Recommendation 6: FAO should create a central focus in its technical work on addressing more systematically the enabling environment of policies, institutions, legislation that are essential for the uptake of technical solutions.** Moreover, FAO should strengthen the capability of its technical units to **provide countries with alternative options** that are assessed from economic, social and environmental perspectives rather than pushing "one-size-fits-all" solutions. Implementing this recommendation will be facilitated by the following actions.

- a) As resources and opportunity permit, the roles and skills of the staff in the technical departments and their policy units should be reviewed and, as judged appropriate, updated to elevate the policy-analytic capacity in the technical departments. This will perhaps entail:
 - Changing the disciplinary mix to include more expertise in economics, including institutional economics and political economy, public policy, administrative sciences, law, rural sociology and other social sciences; particular emphasis may be placed on hiring for experts who combine subject-matter expertise in the respected agricultural subsector with expertise in policy analysis;
 - fostering greater in-House policy dialogue and synergetic interaction (including with other policy staffs) within a broader strategic developmental framework; and
 - creating an environment for better incentives to reach out and collaborate more effectively with relevant partner agencies (e.g., OECD, World Bank, CGIAR) in their respective policy work at all levels.
- b) As needed, FAO should invest in the capacity of technical officers to assess the policy dimension of their policy work, to identify policy windows and to engage in policy reform processes that are related to their technical fields.

357. The above recommendations are consistent with the call by IEE (Rec 3.21) for FAO to move away from technology development, transfer and piloting, in favour of policy support and capacity development. This would involve, inter alia, fostering the enabling environment for technical change, and better strategies to move "global normative" knowledge to the country level. Such desirable moves are clearly identified by IEE, but in-House awareness is not yet fully reflected in the scope and budget of work, or indeed clearly in the machinations of the IPA.

358. The evaluation Team counts itself as privileged indeed to have had this opportunity to observe an important Organization tackling important work at an important time. In fact, considering the current global food and agricultural situation, the Team feels that FAO's role and work in policy is more important than ever. Agriculture and food security have returned to the center stage of the international development policy arena – investment in this sector by development agencies, country governments and the private sector is increasing for the first time after many years of decline. There are impressive examples that achieving "zero hunger" is possible in this world in our lifetime. Yet, the challenges are daunting, too – they range from climate change to the spread of endemic diseases, and from the deterioration of the natural resource base to a global rush for land. FAO has had important successes in its policy work in the past decade – especially at the global level. Yet, ultimately, "all politics is local" – and to achieve its three goals – fighting hunger, using agriculture for poverty reduction and achieving environmental sustainability, policy change needs to happen at the country level. Here, FAO has a unique potential to assist the governments that place so much trust in "their" FAO, but the Organization has not been using this potential effectively -- for reasons that have been identified many years ago but have never been addressed. As FAO is in the middle of a renewal process and at the beginning of a new phase of leadership, it has a unique opportunity to resolve the long-standing

institutional and managerial problems affecting its policy work. The policy window for FAO's own policy change is open now, but it may not be open for long!

References

Nota Bene: In the course of the evaluation, the Team consulted a very large number of documents from all parts of FAO, as well as many documents from other organizations. The ones listed here are only those that are cited in the text of this report. When referred to in the report, FAO documents in general are cited with their details in the narrative or footnotes rather than in this References list. The few exceptions below are those cited most often.

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