

May 2012

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	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	联合国 粮食及 农业组织	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture	Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Hundred and Tenth Session

Rome, 7 - 11 May 2012

**EVALUATION OF FAO'S ROLE AND WORK IN FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE POLICY**

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

Mr Robert Moore
Director, Office of Evaluation
(Evaluation Report)
Tel (06) 570-53903

Mr Manoj Juneja
Deputy Director-General (Operations)
(Management Response)
Tel. (06) 570-54972

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1. This cover page provides the background and key issues for the attention and guidance of the Committee on the attached report *Evaluation of FAO's role and work in food and agriculture policy* and the Management Response.

Background

2. The Programme Committee at its 103rd session in April 2010 gave priority to conduct of an Evaluation of FAO's role and work in policy assistance, as it is a key means of action for the Organization, noting that no evaluation had been carried out on FAO's work in this area since 2001.

Key issues of the Evaluation report

3. The Evaluation concluded that FAO's role and work in policy is more important than ever. The IEE in 2007 pointed to the growing centrality of policy support more generally as one of the key means for FAO to provide assistance to its Members. This was contrasted with the existing focus on technical assistance projects, and the IEE concluded that FAO needed to gradually move its focus away from such field projects and towards policy-level support. The Evaluation fully supported this observation.

4. 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 can be debated and action agreed. This Evaluation found that FAO has delivered well in this area, and that the quality of FAO's policy research and analysis compares favourably to that of other international organizations that conduct applied agricultural policy research and assistance. However, FAO has been less successful in taking on a global leadership role on the question of malnutrition.

5. At the country level, the Evaluation found that FAO does not provide a leading role in policy support. There is insufficient backstopping of FAO Representations for them 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. There is no systematic "policy intelligence" on which country teams can rely. Reasons for these observed performance problems at country level include: lack of organizational accountability and incentives to deliver policy advice at country level.

6. The evaluation formulated six recommendations, most of which were addressed toward identifying the deficiencies in country-level policy work identified by the evaluation team.

Management Response

7. Management appreciates the Evaluation's acknowledgement of the important policy work conducted across the Organization, with its emphasis on the work undertaken by the Economic and Social Department, the Technical Cooperation Department and the decentralized offices. Management concurs with the findings on the dispersion of FAO's policy work at country level, the perceived marginal role played by FAO in influencing national policy dialogue, and the challenge faced by the Organization of being a trusted adviser of government, while trying to influence national decision-making to translate global issues and agreements into country action and policies. Management also agrees with the need to strengthen the country-specific policy analysis capacity and to better address the issue of vertical and horizontal fragmentation.

8. Management proposes that follow-up actions should be taken on the basis of an analysis of policy functions currently covered, as well as an identification of functions that would need to be developed and strengthened or phased-out in accordance with a long-term vision of policy work at FAO (including nature, focus and content) and integrating all FAO's core policy work. The Evaluation has taken place in a rapidly evolving context, and ongoing reform and strategic planning processes are relevant to the implementation of the recommendations for the reform of FAO's policy work.

9. Management accepts all the recommendations of the Evaluation and suggests that special attention be placed on six issues: impact culture; synchronization; capacity and continuity; shift of FAO's technical assistance from field project to policy level; accountability system; and economies of scale. Management agrees with the recommendation included in Recommendation 2.2 to shift policy work capacity in the Policy Assistance and Integrated Food Security Support Services (TCSP and

TCSF) to the Economic and Social Department, and to the decentralized offices, and understands the critical need to move ahead in implementing Recommendation 2.1 on accountability in order for 2.2 to be effective.

10. The plan of action includes key steps that will be undertaken by June 2012 and others by the end of 2012 and into 2013 and beyond. Management stresses the important implications for financial resource requirements, including for both the net appropriation and voluntary contributions.

Guidance Sought

11. The Programme Committee may wish to provide its views and guidance on the key issues in the Evaluation report, and to the response to the recommendations and proposed follow-up actions by Management.