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Evaluation of FAO's Role in Support of Crop Production

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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Executive summary

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

This report is available in electronic format at: http://www.fao.org/evaluation

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1. Support to crops, meaning mainly food crops but not only, has always represented an (if not the most) important component in FAO's efforts to achieve its Global Goals. This evaluation was initially meant to look at the organization's performance in supporting crop production under the FAO Strategic Framework 2010-19, Strategic Objective A: "Sustainable Intensification of Crop Production". But by the time the evaluation activities were to be started a new and completely changed framework was being approved by FAO's Governing Bodies.

2. In response to these changes the focus of the evaluation was adjusted and the emphasis was re-directed, although it maintained its general orientation to look at the organization's activities in the area of crop support, what was done, how effectively and what could be improved. This evaluation is a forward-looking learning exercise, aimed at generating information useful for the implementation of the five new Strategic Objectives in general, and in particular SO-2: "Increase and improve the provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner." In practice the evaluation has become a case study – using crops as an entry point – of the role more generally of *FAO technical assistance to production* in implementing the Reviewed Strategic Framework and the Medium-Term Plan 2014-17 (FAO, 2012).

3. In implementing its task the evaluation has used several tools, including reviewing enormous amounts of documentary evidence, a questionnaire to both FAO staff and external stakeholders, and large numbers of in-depth interviews with FAO and non-FAO stakeholders, in Rome, in countries receiving FAO support and among partners. The evaluation has kept a close eye on the parallel ongoing process through which FAO planners were transforming the principles of the Reviewed Strategic Framework into Organizational Outcomes and Outputs, products and services, indicators and operational guidelines. This has not been an easy task, as many of the important concepts kept on evolving, taking definitive form only by the time the evaluation was being completed. Nevertheless, it has been possible to develop relevant conclusions and recommendations, which the team expects will contribute towards improving the effectiveness of FAO's activities in the area of crops support and technical support more generally, and to the achievement of FAO's Global Goals.

4. Crop activities are carried out by many technical divisions in FAO. However, for practical reasons, a majority of the efforts of the evaluation have focused on the activities carried out under the leadership of the Plant Production and Protection Division, AGP, which are representative of what FAO does in crops. That said, whenever possible the evaluation also investigated the crops activities of other divisions.

5. This report is made up of seven chapters: Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter 2 deals with the context, scope and limitations of the evaluation exercise. Chapter 3 summarizes the conceptual evolution of the approach to crops support and FAO's strategic framework. Chapter 4 looks at the evolution of the crops related project portfolio over the evaluation period (2007-2013). Chapter 5 examines the institutional issues. Chapter 6 analyses some of the newer issues which have emerged over this period. The seventh and final chapter presents the evaluation's major strategic recommendations.

6. FAO's activities in crops during the period of the evaluation (2007-2013) represented an investment in projects of close to USD 2billion, deployed through 1408 projects, the majority of them – about 57% – under emergency funding. Of the rest, the development projects, the majority are small (less than USD 500,000). In terms of regional concentration,

Africa represents 47% of the total number of projects. The Asia crops portfolio is the next largest, with Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, and the Near East showing a smaller number of projects.

7. Of the development projects, the ones with specific production objectives (as opposed to plant protection, genetic resources, institutional support, etc.) represent less than one quarter. Adding in sustainable production intensification projects raises the proportion to about one third. In terms of the crops covered, there are only a few projects dealing with the crops of global importance in terms of food security (rice and some on wheat). Others work on cassava, beans, dates, olives, fruits, vegetables and horticultural crops, among others. Organic agriculture, urban and peri-urban agriculture and good agricultural practices are also areas covered, particularly in recent years.

8. The most important crop-related interventions are those in plant protection – covering a wide range of pests and diseases with a heavy emphasis on transboundary pests, integrated pest management (IPM) and farmer field schools. Many are also concerned with the technical approaches to pesticide management and compliance with the international instruments in the field and the safe disposal of dangerous or obsolete chemicals. Altogether, projects in plant protection and pesticide management represent about 30% of the non-emergency projects implemented since 2007.

9. FAO's activities in support of crop production also includes a significant segment of normative activities in such forms as FAO support to and hosting of international treaties and conventions, work in crop data, statistics and information, studies, manuals, guidelines and other publications, and workshops, meetings and conferences.

10. FAO's crops support programme is on the whole well appreciated by Member countries and partners. FAO is identified as an important actor in the development and/or dissemination of key technological concepts such as those of IPM, conservation agriculture, farmer field schools and other activities, such as the negotiation of the Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. A closer look at the overall crops support programme, however, also has shown that it tends to be fragmented, in many cases lacking continuity, and not strategic.

11. The evaluation has also found that there is a growing concern that FAO's work in support of crop production has lost a significant degree of the technical quality that once characterized it. FAO's extended and sustained period of budgetary reduction has led to a large drop in the number of technical staff, and critical mass has been lost in many key areas. Decentralisation policies – designed to take the organization's decision making and technical capacities closer to the field – have not helped: critical mass in headquarters teams has continued to suffer, as has the provision of high quality technical support to field activities.

12. In this context, rebuilding technical capacities is probably the most important priority. Human resource trends have to be inverted, and this must be done strategically. Strengthening the human resource base must take into consideration not only the new needs in terms of disciplinary balance emerging from the Reviewed Strategic Framework, but also the new institutional realities, such as the fact that project staff (funded with non-core resources) today represent the majority of the organization's human resources.

13. In the response to the observations made by this evaluation regarding the technical quality of its work, other elements that should have high prominence are a new, more formal

and proactive knowledge management system, and a more strategic use of the resources available through FAO's extensive partnership arrangements – in general also highly appreciated by its partner institutions.

14. The evaluation has also found that FAO is missing opportunities by not fully exploiting some areas of its work. The importance of its work in emergency response is not always fully exploited in its development activities. There is room for further and better linking the two, as there is room for better linking global normative activities with its country level work.

15. The area of support to agricultural research, innovation and technology development for crops is one that FAO needs to review thoroughly. The Organization has allowed its capacities to provide support to national agricultural research, extension and innovations systems – an area where many Member countries traditionally looked and still look to FAO for leadership – to dramatically deteriorate, as the staff resources in the area went from 34 experts fifteen years ago to only six positions today (of which two are vacant).

16. Directly related to this issue, FAO's relations with the CGIAR remain quite patchy and non-strategic, in spite of a generalized and growing agreement about the need for and benefits of a convergence of both organizations' objectives and capacities to support agricultural development.

17. As indicated, the evaluation has framed the above analysis and discussion of FAO's work on crops in the context of the Reviewed Strategic Framework, trying to identify issues and opportunities that could help improve the implementation of the new Strategic Objectives in general, and in particular SO-2, which is where most of the production oriented activities are found.

18. The evaluation emphasises that there is still a need for further articulation of the role of crops support within SO-2 and across the other SOs, with respect to the contribution of crop production to the achievement of FAO's Global Goals. FAO did not have a Theory of Change with respect to crops in the past, and this is still lacking within the context of the Reviewed Strategic Framework. Mapping the role of crops within SO-2, across the other SOs and with respect to the Global Goals will be essential not only for operational coherence, but also in providing guidance to other aspects, such as rebuilding the needed technical capacities, and the construction of more productive partnership strategies at national, regional and global levels.

19. In general, in the countries visited, the evaluation found that there is a high level of convergence between the new vision that FAO is proposing and the implicit policy thinking of governments and partners. The narrative of integrating the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability, and of mainstreaming sustainability objectives and technologies into national agricultural development, resonates well with most recent national objectives and priorities. However this does not seem to be case when looking at the institutional structures with which FAO will have to work in implementing its new vision. There, the silo-based structures typical of the traditional sectoral approaches still prevail. Beyond offering new conceptual approaches, FAO will also need to articulate the new approaches needed to institutionalize this different way of thinking.

Major conclusions and recommendations

20. The sustainable intensification of crop production is a complex, multidisciplinary endeavour and FAO is approaching it as such. Activities in this field cover a wide range of interventions from support to the sustainable management and use of plant genetic resources to all aspects of crop protection. The activities in crop protection cover national issues as well as on the control of transboundary pest and diseases, including the promotion of certain key technological approaches such as IPM and conservation agriculture, areas where the organization has played a leadership role since the early days of their development and dissemination.

21. Support to crop production is deployed both through development activities and as part of emergency responses, where FAO is a key resource in helping countries to get their production capacities back on line after the crisis. And in protracted crisis situations, its efforts focus on the immediate challenges facing those communities affected, but it does so with a development perspective, working to put short term activities in the context of building resilience to the external shocks, whatever their origins may be.

22. Together with these efforts – which could be described as 'field level' – FAO also plays an important role in the development and management of key international components of the global governance of agriculture, and is a major platform for dealing with emerging issues relevant for the sector at the global level.

23. FAO has played and continues to play a unique role, highly appreciated by countries, donors and partners, going from the global issues all the way to supporting the piloting of new technologies and approaches at the farm level, and feeding back field experiences into support to policy making.

24. Appreciation for crops support for the most part falls within this general view, although the team's opinion is that over the period of the evaluation support to 'sustainable intensification of crop production' (Strategic Objective A under the 'old' Medium Term Plan 2010-13) has lacked focus, probably as a consequence of the thorough and ongoing process of programme change and reorganization that was taking place in AGP – the division responsible for the bulk of the activities in the area – and throughout FAO following the Independent External Evaluation.

25. ***A focus on exploiting the organization's comparative advantages:*** FAO has a comparative advantage in the fact that it is an inter-governmental organization and the sole UN organization for food and agriculture, as well as a trusted knowledge broker and convener for global dialogue. Further, being a membership based organization gives it distinctive access to country policy levels. It should seek to exploit these advantages to its fullest extent and make the most out of the resources it can invest – or attract from donor sources and partners – in support of improved crop production.

26. There are many outstanding examples of the importance and strategic value of FAO's global role, where it works successfully across political boundaries. One is its long standing global programme on locusts, another is the current experiences of global programmes to control the new wheat rust strain (Ug99), where FAO has played a pivotal role in bringing together international, regional and national programmes for surveillance to detect the presence of a new and damaging strain of wheat rust, and, in conjunction with CIMMYT and national wheat breeding programmes, the development of new rust resistant varieties. The

global plant-breeding programme, through which FAO introduced modern plant breeding techniques into many national plant-breeding programmes, is also a relevant example of this type of work, despite the fact that this programme has now ceased. The Global IPM Facility, which ran from 1995-2012, was a similar global programme where FAO demonstrated leadership that mobilised international technical and financial resources around a key issue, and enabled experiences to be shared across countries.

27. In developing FAO's future work on crops and cropping systems to deliver the new strategic objectives, FAO should design and implement more such global and regional programmes, which mobilize partnerships among the best available sources of knowledge worldwide to address specific issues. Such programmes require FAO to have long term scientific and technical experts who can lead global programmes. FAO's role and major comparative advantage is to show global leadership on critical issues of food and agriculture, not simply to mobilize resources and recruit technical specialists to implement short term projects. FAO management needs to address this critical issue in its future staffing needs.

28. In particular, FAO plays a critical role as the trusted repository of *intergovernmental conventions, treaties and agreements* on a range of issues affecting crops, including the conservation of plant biodiversity, protection against transboundary pests and diseases and the safe use of pesticides. FAO provides the secretariat to support these various treaties and agreements and also assists countries to meet their obligations in implementing them for the common good. FAO is also the source of origin of many global norms, standards and guidelines for all aspects of food and agricultural production, in areas such as food safety, pesticide regulation, pest and diseases control, seed production, crop and soil/water relations among many others. FAO's global normative role is a unique one that plays to its strengths, and one which it does well, and will become even more essential in a context where existing norms and standards will be needed to reflect the sustainability principles implicit in the new strategic approach.

Recommendation 1: *As a global, inter-governmental but resource constrained organization, in order to maximise its impact on crop production, FAO should give its first priority to its work on global public goods and global and regional efforts on major issues. Country-specific technical activities in crops, while important, should be the second priority for resource allocation, except where these activities pilot or inform innovative policy and new directions.*

In particular, FAO should continue to maintain and strengthen its global role as convenor of international treaties and conventions, and as the source of global norms, standards and guidelines in food and agriculture. In doing so it should become proactive in bringing to the attention of the relevant bodies the changes in norms and standards required for effectively mainstreaming sustainability.

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29. As well highlighted by the IEE and then further confirmed by the 2012 Evaluation of FAO's Policy Work, FAO as a global intergovernmental organization sits close to the "policy environment" side. Throughout the evaluation, national and international partners and donors emphasized this comparative advantage and what it means to optimizing resource use and partnership strategies at all levels. With regard to crops support, this does not mean

abandoning field level work, but emphasizes the "piloting" nature that technology applications and farm level work have to have to justify themselves. Their "learning" value has been proven beyond discussion and there is recognition that to be effective in policy advice downstream experiences provide essential – and legitimizing – inputs. However, an organization like FAO can no longer justify this type of field activity as an end in itself.

Recommendation 2: *In the policy-to-technology continuum, FAO should redouble its efforts to actively reorient the focus of its crop activities away from technology-centred field projects and towards the* ***strengthening of national and international policies****, through the provision of the most solid and authoritative technical and scientific input to policy formulation and the creation of enabling policy environments supportive of crop production improvement.*

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30. Many countries look to FAO as an informed and neutral source of science-based knowledge and technical advice on all aspects of food and agriculture. As it expands its role as a knowledge broker, FAO should ensure that the information it makes available to its member countries continues to be accurate, timely and accessible, including to its smaller and less well-endowed member countries that depend on FAO as their primary source of knowledge on matters of food and agriculture. In playing a stronger role as a knowledge broker, FAO should not shy away from addressing topical and at times controversial issues.

31. Science and emerging technologies, such as ICTs, applications of molecular biology and physics to agronomy (including the sometimes controversial GMOs), and many more, are already playing a critical role in the future development of agriculture, food and natural resource management, in general, and crop production in particular. FAO has a tendency to be overly 'neutral,' to the point of being timid in its approach to discussing the related issues and how to ensure that all interested countries can access and benefit from new developments. FAO is well positioned to put these discussions on the table, considering both their political and technical dimensions, and to assess the benefits and risks of their applications to agriculture, as guidance for national decision makers. In this effort FAO should give due consideration to the most appropriate way of drawing its Governing Bodies into playing an active role in these discussions.

Recommendation 3: *Building on the fact that it is a trusted knowledge broker that provides accurate and timely information to decision makers in all member countries, FAO should be less timid about* ***taking an energetic role of advocacy*** *for advanced science-based technologies that may at times be controversial. As stated in Recommendation 1, it should continue to consolidate its role as a global platform for addressing strategic issues relating to crop production development.*

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32. ***Human resource capacities in line with FAO's role and the new challenges:*** FAO staff capacity in the area of crop support has been on the decline for the last two decades and the present staff profile is more the result of a process of attrition than of conscious strategic decisions to adjust disciplinary balances to changing conditions and institutional needs.

Furthermore, the ratio of Regular Programme to Project staff balance has also changed significantly as Trust Fund resources have increased relative to the regular budget. This makes it imperative that staffing decisions are carefully planned and new knowledge management instruments implemented, in order to gradually rebuild FAO's scientific and technical capacities in support of crop production.

33. At the same time, and recognising that FAO's resource constraints will prevent it from expanding its permanent staff to the levels required by the new challenges, the Organization needs to explore innovative ways to strengthen its technical capacities at a reasonable cost. One approach which appears both possible and reasonable to the evaluation team could be to develop a formal (and paid) network of external expertise from academia, other institutions, consultant networks, etc., who are kept available through such methods as retainers, guaranteed workdays, scheduled planning meetings, and so on. Such a network can then be used to provide conceptual and technical support as and when needed to strengthen FAO's in-house capacity.

Recommendation 4: *In order to strengthen its ability to serve member countries in improving crop production, FAO needs to develop a clear, medium to long-term* ***human resource strategy****, directly linked to the 'Theory of Change' (see also Recommendation 7), which should:*

(a) ***rebuild its technical capacities*** *in the crop sector, with a long term strategic view both in terms of the competencies and skills that are needed in-house to (i) provide the conceptual and scientific leadership necessary to enable the transition to production systems that are more sustainable – environmentally, economically and socially, and (ii) be effective mobilizers of external networks in support of its programmes.*

(b) fully implement the internal ***Technical Networks,*** *key to FAO's ability to play its role in technical assistance effectively, and that have been on the books for several years now but have not yet become effective. This must be done with appropriate levels of management and resources, to ensure (i) the development of "communities of practice" around the priority disciplinary fields needed to allow the innovative and effective implementation of the new vision, and (ii) the continued contribution of both Regular Programme and project staff to the build-up of the organization's knowledge capital.*

(c) build an ***external group of experts*** *made up of the key world experts in the areas of FAO's mandate in crops, that, on a contracted semi-permanent basis, provide conceptual and technical inputs as needed, or find an alternative method for provision of continuous expert input to FAO's own understaffed divisions.*

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34. ***The strategic role of research and innovation: FAO support to national research and extension, and the link with the CGIAR:*** The new vision that FAO seeks to achieve through its Reviewed Strategic Framework promotes the fundamental principle that improvements in productivity will only work if conditioned on full sustainability, and this

implies going well beyond the present state of the art in agriculture. This puts the focus on the strength of national research and innovation systems. Years of diminished support have made it clear that national public sector capacities in research and extension are a necessary condition for any sustainable effort at improving crop production.

35. Over the last two decades, in line with donors and IFIs, FAO dramatically diminished its capacity to work in this field, going from maintaining a large research and extension division in the 1990s down to the much reduced staffing level of today. Demand for support from members is high and growing, and this trend must be reversed, but recognizing that there are other actors in the field and that the job will demand resources and capacities that, most probably, are beyond FAO's reach in the short run without a significant reorientation of priorities and reallocation of budget. Working through supporting the establishment of the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) could be an option, but beyond that FAO should explore more assertive actions through a joint effort with the CGIAR Consortium.

Recommendation 5: *FAO should rehabilitate and strengthen its capacity to support national agricultural research, extension and innovation systems. This support is requested and needed, and will help countries improve their capacities to exploit current and new scientific advances emerging from centres of excellence all over the world. In doing so FAO should a) make better use of the Joint FAO/IAEA Division on Nuclear Technologies in Food and Agriculture, b) give high priority to playing an active role in the design of the G-20-sponsored Tropical Agricultural Platform, for which it provides the secretariat, and c) seek to reinvigorate other partnerships with donors and bilateral agencies in support of national agricultural research, extension and innovation systems.*

The team recognises that this recommendation has implications on the priorities through which FAO determines allocation of its resources. However, the team feels the high importance accorded by members to this area of work in particular should lead to a thorough reconsideration by the Committee on Agriculture and the other FAO Governing Bodies.

36. In reinvigorating its support to national agricultural research, extension and innovation systems FAO should also review its conceptual approach to working with such national systems, as there is the need to recognize a much broader range of public and private stakeholders than has been the case in the past, both at the national and international levels. FAO's support should include technical assistance for the institutional and operational strengthening of the organizations involved. It should also link them to FAO's advocacy role, particularly in promoting higher investment levels in research and innovation, and in supporting the creation of national policy environments which provide the right incentives.

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37. Although FAO has been a co-sponsor of the CGIAR since its creation, the two organizations have always remained at "arms-length," rather than coming together to work as complementary and synergistic resources in support of crop production in particular, and agricultural development in general. The team found nearly unanimously positive opinions regarding the win-win nature of a closer interaction between FAO and the CG system, the first bringing its political/policy links and country network, and the second its scientific and technical resources. For this to happen, FAO has to become proactive and move beyond the present (2013) Memorandum of Understanding. The current CGIAR strategy is to focus on

what it calls "integrated delivery," which means to get its products (research results, which are global public goods) to be adopted and put to use. The strategy states that "to achieve global impact, […] partnerships with other actors are essential to complete delivery."[1] It is a propitious moment for FAO to seek a much closer synergy with the CGIAR.

Recommendation 6: *FAO must be more proactive in its relations and interaction with the CGIAR, developing a* ***strategic partnership****. FAO must work both to participate actively in the priority setting process of the CGIAR, and vice-versa, to give the CGIAR a voice in FAO's priority setting. Where there is consensus on the products of CG research, FAO would provide the needed support to translate the Centres' products into delivery of development outcomes, such as through support to countries in the creation of an enabling environment for uptake, including necessary piloting and up-scaling of selected new technological responses as they become available.*

38. In doing so FAO should continue to work with the CGIAR on the development of specific technologies and pilot experiences, but the more important effort should be on creating the internal political and operational processes to move the relationship to a more strategic-institutional level. To support this, FAO should more fully incorporate the CGIAR as a resource to mobilize in support of the new vision it promotes in its Reviewed Strategic Framework. A first step would be the identification of technological challenges implied in the Reviewed Strategic Framework including the related new research needs and to feed them into the CG priority setting process, particularly in the context of the 2nd Call for Consortium Research Programme proposals currently underway.

39. In terms of piloting experiences, FAO should consider using the current plan to pilot the Reviewed Strategic Framework in selected countries bringing together all five SOs. These pilots could also include collaboration with the Consortium Research Programmes working on technologies relevant to the countries' specific production situations.

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40. ***Crops within the Reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-19:*** In the past FAO has not had a well-defined Theory of Change regarding sustainable crop production intensification, which could strategically guide resource allocation within this technical area over time. The Reviewed Strategic Framework represents an important improvement over this situation. However, the role of crops is only articulated at a largely aggregated level and the extent and nature of crop production interventions are yet to be identified. Crop support appears across the five Strategic Objectives, but there is no clear view in the Strategic Framework about how crops capacity should evolve or grow.

Recommendation 7: *In beginning implementation of the Reviewed Strategic Framework, it is recommended that FAO carry out an exercise to highlight the role of crop production as a contributor to the respective Strategic Objectives outcomes, address the coherence of crop interventions within and between SOs, and to explore the intervention logic of the collective crop production contributions of the SOs towards the delivery of FAO's Global Goals. Such*

[1] The CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework: Management Update, 2013-2014, page 7, CGIAR Consortium Office, December 20, 2013

an effort is essential not only to inform prioritisation and intervention design in crops work and to support evaluation and impact assessment, but also, with a longer term perspective, to help better define the technical capacities which the organization will need to retain or develop.

41. The bulk of programme emphasis today is in the area of crop protection and pest and pesticide management, while support to productivity appears to have a much lower emphasis. The team feels, however, that in pursuing its new Strategic Objectives, FAO must bring *more balance* to its future programmes on sustainably increasing productivity of crops and cropping systems, particularly in a context where emerging issues such as climate change are expected to upset and transform existing conditions. The balance should be between the goals of **sustainability** and of **productivity**. Both changes need to occur synergistically to achieve long lasting food security. If this is not the case, and instead FAO concentrates on social and environmental sustainability and neglects productivity issues (as the Strategic Framework currently seems to do), it runs the risk of being left behind in the global efforts to deliver a "more food secure world."

42. FAO has a long-standing and successful role in established technological approaches and tools such as Conservation Agriculture, Integrated Pest Management and Farmer Field Schools, as well as newer ones such as Climate-Smart Agriculture, all of which appear particularly suited to support the type of productive behaviour changes demanded by its new strategic vision. In developing the above mapping FAO should pay particular attention to how all these approaches it has developed and promoted in the past come together in a solid technological platform to support the new production pathways which will be required.

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43. Within that framework, due consideration should be given the issue of the "transition" from a crop focused agenda to one which seeks to embrace a multi-sectoral, ecosystems and landscape approach underpinned by principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability. This transition represents a major change of paradigm for most countries to which FAO provides assistance. Looking at SO-2 specifically, there is a key risk implicit in taking forward the new approach it promotes: what is the extent of national political interest, let alone commitment and real demand, for such an integrated approach which places such a strong priority on 'full sustainability'? The current structure of national (and often donor) institutions, still largely silo-based, makes such a transition difficult, even with political will. Further, there is still a lack of proven models of these approaches at scale.

44. Consideration will also need to be given to issues relating to the scale of production and the role of different types of farmers in achieving a food secure world. How does FAO position itself with respect to the "subsistence farmers" to "commercially-linked farmers" continuum? How does it balance its support to the different scales and types of farmers and farming systems with regard to crop production, food production, poverty alleviation, and rural development? There are totally different sets of issues depending on who is the focus of support, and the Renewed Strategic Framework does not advance far enough with regard to recognition of these differences.

Recommendation 8: *Since the Reviewed Strategic Framework recognizes and indeed emphasizes that there will have to be a "transition" towards widespread adoption of full*

sustainability as a central condition for agricultural development, there is a critical need to define key sequential changes and corresponding interventions required to accompany this transition. This includes identifying the key entry points (technical, institutional, policy) at different stages of the "transition" and for different types of farmers and farming systems (e.g., subsistence versus market-linked), and forecasting the likely impact of different entry points and types of interventions, and the trade-offs and the costs and benefits of the different options.

45. This mapping would not only be an important tool for FAO to make rational choices on the most cost-effective way to achieve its objectives, but also to help guide policy makers, development partners and researchers in managing the "transition" from a crop focused agenda to one which seeks to embrace a multi-sectoral, ecosystems and landscape approaches underpinned by principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability.

46. The evaluation wishes to recognize the efforts of the organization to advance in relation to the above recommendations during the latter part of 2013. The documentation distributed to the team in January 2014[2] reflected the progress achieved in the discussion of a "house-wide" concept of *sustainability,* and guidelines for its mainstreaming in specific countries. This represents significant progress towards providing the needed operational framework to the new strategic approach. In moving forward the need remains for further work to (i) adjust the general principles stated in terms of their contribution to "sustainable agriculture" to the particular implications for crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries as special and distinct components, and (ii) further elaborate on the criteria to address trade-offs under different agro-ecological, social and economic circumstances.

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47. In addition to the above major recommendations, the full report provides throughout the text a number of other suggestions, advice and more detailed recommendations, which expand on and complement the major ones. These have been highlighted in the text of the full report and are included in a table as Appendix 2 to that document for ease of reference. In order to understand and take on board the full intentions of these 'other' recommendations, the evaluation team encourages readers to consider them in their context as they appear in the full report.

[2] FAO (2013) "Sustainable food and agriculture: Vision, principles and approaches" and "*Strategic Objective 2:* Next steps for mainstreaming agricultural sustainability at FAO, and implementing it in selected countries during 2014-2015"