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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Hundred and Fifteenth Session

Rome, 26-30 May 2014

Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

In line with the recommendations of the 112th session of the Programme Committee (CL 145/6 para. 24.b) concerning modalities for saving costs, while ensuring adequate access to information contained in Evaluation reports, document PC 115/4 is presented as a comprehensive executive summary translated in FAO languages, while the Evaluation report in its entirety is published on the FAO Evaluation Web site in the original language.

Guidance sought by the Programme Committee

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.

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

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1. FAO Management welcomes the *Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean*. This document will contribute directly to the ongoing strengthening of FAO's structure and capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in other regions.

2. This is the last of five regional evaluations undertaken at the request of FAO's governing bodies. Like the previous four, its value lies not only in its eight recommendations, but also in the suggestions, findings and analyses underpinning the recommendations. Findings and lessons from this evaluation will be added to those of the other regional evaluations as part of Management's ongoing efforts to maximize impacts and results, in particular at the country level, as part of the implementation of the reviewed Strategic Framework.

3. Management broadly supports the evaluation's main findings and recommendations and believes that they are in line with the ongoing approach to strengthen decentralization and reflect several of the actions that are already being implemented. As a result, the evaluation will have a direct bearing on future Management decisions and actions in both the Latin America and Caribbean region, but also elsewhere.

4. The evaluation provides an important snapshot of the progress that has been made since the implementation of wide-ranging transformative changes across the Organization which began at the start of 2012. The evaluation highlights a number of important areas requiring further reflection and possible adjustment and change.

5. The evaluation underscores the centrality of Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs), reaffirming the findings of previous evaluations, in particular those of the Africa and the Asia Pacific regions. The evaluation also affirms the critical importance of strong FAO country leadership, a key pillar of the changes that are being put in place to strengthen FAO's country performance. The evaluation welcomes the increasing emphasis placed on South-South Cooperation (SSC) and stresses the importance of building up endogenous resource mobilisation capacities at the regional and country levels as a basis for extending SSC within the region.

6. The evaluation highlights a number of important areas requiring further attention. It highlights the importance of the comprehensive review of FAO's project support cost policy and methodologies that is currently underway at the request of the Finance Committee. The evaluation also drew attention to the need to strengthen FAO's capacity and efforts with regard to gender mainstreaming within the region. Management supports this finding and welcomes the analysis and rationale put forward to support the related recommendation.

7. The evaluation makes eight recommendations, covering a broad spectrum of issues and concerns. It provides "suggested measures" for implementing seven of the recommendations. Management fully accepts six of the eight recommendations. Two recommendations are partially accepted, and in both cases Management agrees with the spirit of the recommendation but raises questions with regard to some of the suggested measures.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that FAO manage the field programme with strict effectiveness and efficiency criteria.

8. Partially accepted: Management agrees that the field programme must be managed with strict effectiveness and efficiency criteria and will continue to apply and improve the related measures accordingly. Management does not support the suggestion to create a "Reserve Fund", as the Financial Regulations provide sufficient flexibility to manage resources without resorting to a "reserve fund" for the field programme. Concerning the two suggested measures on TCP, the current arrangements for the regional management and allocation of TCP resources are fully in line with governing body decisions and guidance and Management does not believe that there is scope to consider the "automatic preliminary allocation" of TCP resources for country activities beyond the regional level.

Recommendation 6: FAO should improve the operational and financial management of the Regular Programme and field programme in the region.

9. Partially accepted: Management agrees that continuous attention should be given to improving the operational and financial management to all programmes. However, it does not support the

suggested measures, in particular, those regarding the distribution and use of reimbursements for project Administrative and Operational Support (AOS). A comprehensive review of the policy regarding project support costs is being undertaken during 2013-14 at the request of the Finance Committee (JM 2013.2/3 and FC 151/8 refer). Therefore the distribution and use of AOS reimbursements proposed in the second suggested measure cannot be accepted, nor can its use to consolidate a proposed “reserve fund” be agreed (see recommendation 5.1).

10. Further information is provided in the attached Matrix. Management also takes careful note of the many suggestions, findings and analyses linked to each of the evaluation’s recommendations.

Evaluation Recommendation	Management Response Accepted, Partially Accepted or Rejected and Comment on the Recommendation	Management Plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further Funding Required (Y or N)
<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> - FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and the RLC should consolidate FAO presence in the region. In order to do so, it should adopt new working models to adapt to the financial reality and the Organization's requirements to provide efficient and effective services to member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.</p> <p>Suggested Measures:</p> <p>1. Transfer Cuba and the Dominican Republic from the Caribbean Subregion to the Mesoamerica Subregion.</p> <p>2. Rebalance the location of Technical Officers in Santiago, Chile, and in Panama.</p> <p>3. The arrangement of Representations being managed by designated Technical Officers should be discontinued.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Management accepts the Recommendation and supports many of the suggested measures. However, in regard to suggested measure 4, governing body guidance will be required on questions of country presence.</p>	<p>1. <u>Action completed</u>: Operational responsibility for the Dominican Republic was transferred to the Subregional Office in Panama in October 2012 and for Cuba in December 2013.</p>	RLC	2014-15 biennium	
		<p>2. <u>Ongoing</u>: Ongoing skills mix reviews begun in 2013 have led to shifts in technical officers between RLC and the Subregional Offices in the region, in line with country needs and priorities.</p>	RLC/OSD/OSP	Ongoing	N
		<p>3. There is only one remaining Outposted Technical Officer (OTO) position in the region.</p>	OSD	Unclear	Y

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<p>4. RLC should consider establishing multiple-accreditation systems, with a view to managing the portfolios of two or more countries. This recommendation could be applied to the following three groups of countries: Caribbean countries; Costa Rica; and Argentina, Chile and Uruguay in South America.</p> <p>5. The aggregate technical profile of the current staff of Technical Officers in the region and subregions should be defined to manage the five new Strategic Objectives effectively and efficiently within the region. The strengthening of the Subregional Office for Mesoamerica should also be prioritized in the short term. ... Senior Management of FAO and RLC should restructure technical services and teams, in terms of specializations and geographical location. These teams should consider adopting truly multidisciplinary working arrangements and structures.</p>	For members	4. Management is reviewing existing multiple accreditation arrangements and will consult with Members as necessary.	RLC, OSD	Ongoing	N
		5. Note is taken of this suggested measure which is in line with the approach adopted in support of the implementation of the reviewed Strategic Framework.	RLC, SOs, Technical Departments	Ongoing	To be determined

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6. It is recommended that RLC and TCE strengthen the presence of Disaster Risk Management Officers in Central America and the Caribbean. 7. OSD, in collaboration with FAO Legal and Ethics Office (LEG), should review the existing Host Agreement arrangements at country level and formulate a plan to update them or sign new agreements where necessary in a reasonable time frame.		6. Management will look for opportunities to mobilise extra-budgetary resources to cover the costs of these positions through prioritisation of this need in the Regional Resource Mobilization Plan. 7. Since the second half of 2012, FAO has begun selectively contacting Members with regard to reviewing the Host Country Agreement and discussions are ongoing in several instances. The exercise will continue in 2014.	RLC/TCS OSD, LEG, RLC	2014-15 As required	Y (Extra-budgetary resources only) N
<u>Recommendation 2 - The Evaluation Team recommends that FAO senior management quickly implement an exhaustive process to clarify the scope of decentralization among its staff in the region, including on the roles and responsibilities between the three layers existing in RLC (regional, sub-regional and country) and HQ.</u> Suggested measures: 1. Emphasizing and clarifying the roles of the three levels of decentralized office (regional, subregional and national) and the subsidiarity criteria	Accepted	1. Guidance on roles and responsibilities in decentralized offices will be updated.	RLC, OSD, OHR OSD/OHR	End 2014 3 Q 2014	N N

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among them. This process should include a clarification of the role of Technical Officers that highlights their main function of supporting the implementation of FAO programmes in countries and providing advice at that level.					
2. Clarifying the approval process for Technical Cooperation Programmes and to eliminate redundant steps.		2. Management will review and identify actions to clarify the approval process for TCP projects in the region and to eliminate redundant steps, in line with broader actions to improve prioritisation and alignment of the TCP being undertaken as part of the TCP enhancement process (see 5.2 below) that will further streamline the approval process.	RLC and TC/OSD	2014	N
3. Improving communication and enhancing training on FAO contractual arrangements in Country Offices.		3. Improved guidance on contracts and related HR matters will be prepared.	RLC/OSD/OHR	2014	N
Recommendation 3 - FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and the Regional Office should strengthen the use of Country Programming Frameworks (CPF) as the main instrument for establishing working arrangements and priorities in countries.	Accepted The CPF is the basis for all FAO activities at the country level. FAO's results framework is built around a single "line of sight" that connects the five Strategic Objectives with CPFs.		RLC, OSD	2014-15 biennium	N

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Suggested measures: 1. It is recommended that OSD and RLC introduce an online digital platform for the drafting of CPFs, with a view to: a) making the provision of technical inputs by Technical Officers easier and more transparent; b) strengthening corporate information and keeping CPFs up to date; c) ensuring the use of CPF drafting guidelines, including maximum length, inclusion of monitoring targets and indicators, and an annual work plan. 2. Country Representatives must prioritize: 1) defining indicators, targets and baselines for the level of expected results; 2) establishing mechanisms for providing progress reports to governments; 3) integrating a portfolio-management approach to generate synergies and complementarities; 4) estimating needs in terms of mobilization of resources and the actions needed to obtain them. 3. Country Representations should develop short-term plans to disseminate their CPFs among the United Nations System Country Team, other donors and multilateral agencies in the country and wider sectors within host governments.		1. An Organization-wide online platform will be introduced in 2014-15 to facilitate coordination and monitoring of the CPF process, including quality assurance review, across regions.	OSD	2015	N
		2. The use of the CPFs for setting priorities of FAO's work at the country and the monitoring of the achievements of its results will be strengthened.	RLC	Ongoing	N
		3. Management will act to ensure country offices continue to implement and report on the <i>Communication strategy and (short-term) plan</i> , including aspects related to dissemination of the CPFs and their annual	RLC, OSD, OCC	Ongoing	N

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<p>4. RLC and Country Representatives ensure their future CPF drafting processes involve governmental counterparts other than those from Ministries of Agriculture, as well as non-governmental partners (in accordance with the Organization's new strategies for the private sector and civil society).</p> <p>5. OSD and RLC institutionalize CPFs as the framework for establishing the work priorities of the entire Organization in the relevant countries. These CPFs should be formally authorized (with party signatures and validity period) in order to operate within a country. They should be respected by all FAO bodies and levels, including multidisciplinary teams, the RLC and Subregional Offices.</p> <p>6. As coordinators of the Multidisciplinary Teams, the regional management and subregional Directors should ensure that regional and subregional projects respond to and support the work streams agreed in the CPFs, and check that they match the new Strategic Objectives (SO). The</p>		<p>progress (as part of FAOR Annual Reports).</p> <p>4. The suggested measure is in line with corporate guidelines on CPF formulation. Management will monitor compliance through enhanced quality control.</p>	RLC, OSD	2014	N
		5. This proposed measure is in line with current programming procedures put in place to support the implementation of the reviewed Strategic Framework.	RLC	2014	N
		6. Corporate guidance will be updated in line with the suggested measure. Management reaffirms the actions agreed at the 114 th session of the Programme Committee (November 2013) in relation to Recommendation 1.5 of the	RLC	2014	N

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variety of the CPFs should be reflected in regional and subregional projects, without the need to force the incorporation of countries or a uniform treatment thereof.		Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Africa on increasing the responsibility/authority of decentralized offices for regional, subregional (and where relevant, global) programmes and projects being implemented in regions, subregions and countries (Management Response to Recommendation 1.5 in PC 114/2 Sup.1 refers).			
<p>Recommendation 4 - FAO Senior Management at the Headquarters and at the Regional Office should consolidate the regional sphere as the priority intermediary between country-level and global priority-setting and planning, as well as adopting some efficiency measures as part of their processes.</p> <p>Suggested measures:</p> <p>1. This Evaluation found no grounds for recommending prioritizing areas and resources at the subregional level.</p> <p>2. It is recommended that RLC and OSD consider options for a more efficient organization of the Regional Conference, for the Organization and for member countries. In this context,</p>	<p>Accepted in principle</p> <p>Management agrees with the spirit of Recommendation 4, but does not agree with the first suggested measure. The second suggested measure falls beyond the scope of Management's decision and is an issue for Members' review and decision.</p> <p>For Members</p>	<p>1. Regional-level planning in 2014 includes subregional and country priorities and needs.</p> <p>2. Management is continuously looking to improve processes linked to Regional Conferences in all regions, through feedback and lesson learning. However,</p>	<p>RLC, OSP, OSD</p> <p>OSD/CPA</p>	<p>2014-15</p> <p>2014-15 biennium</p>	<p></p> <p>N</p>

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priority should be given to disseminating the new strategic framework among member country governments (including Ministries of Agriculture and other ministerial bodies).		any higher-level strategic and operational decisions, for example, regarding the timing of Regional Conferences, as highlighted in the main evaluation report, are made by Members.			
Recommendation 5 – It is recommended that FAO manage the Field Programme with strict effectiveness and efficiency criteria.	Partially Accepted Management agrees that the field programme must be managed with strict effectiveness and efficiency criteria and will continue to apply and improve the related measures accordingly. Management does not support the suggestion to create a “Reserve Fund”, as the Financial Regulations provide sufficient flexibility to manage resources without resorting to a “reserve fund” for the field programme. Likewise, Management does not believe that there is scope to consider the “automatic preliminary allocation” of TCP resources for country activities beyond the regional level, as proposed in the second “suggested measure” associated with this Recommendation.		RLC	2014-2015	N
Suggested measures: 1. RLC, with support from TCS and		1. The related measures will be applied and improved.	RLC, OSD, OSP	2014	N

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<p>OSP, should monitor the Field Programme with explicit portfolio-management criteria and appropriate and up-to-date financial information. The Field Programme must have its own accounts, without prejudice to an integrated portfolio management. Its costs should be completely funded by the Programme itself. As recommended by many internal audits, this Evaluation supports the creation of a “Reserve Fund” in order to provide sustainability, a predictable time frame, innovation potential and to hedge against temporary funding shortfalls for field presence.</p> <p>2. The Evaluation recommends that RLC establish clear and transparent criteria for distributing regional allocations under Technical Cooperation Programmes. A substantial proportion should be subject to an automatic preliminary allocation according to variables relevant to FAO operations in the region (the Evaluation considered per capita gross national income, Atlas methodology, extreme poverty rates and under-nutrition rates).</p>		<p>2. Management will apply the current arrangements for the distribution of TCP resources in regions. This issue has been discussed extensively in the context of the IPA. Current arrangements for the regional management and allocation of TCP resources are fully in line with governing bodies’ decisions and guidance provided (cf. C2009/7 para 55 and Annex VII of the MTP 2014-17 - C2013/3).</p>			

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3. It is recommended that the RLC establish an advisory board made up of regional FAO representatives to advise on issues relating to the allocation of resources under regional and subregional Technical Cooperation Programmes.	Moreover, and in line with recent governing bodies' guidance, emphasis is given to ensuring the use of the Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) to prioritize all in-country TCP assistance, in line with agreed actions for the Enhancement of the TCP (JM 2013.2/2 refers).	3. A pilot regional TCP advisory board has been established in the RLC region in line with this suggested measure. Its value and contribution are currently under review.	RLC, TCD	2014-15	N
<u>Recommendation 6</u> – FAO should improve the operational and financial management of the Regular Programme and Field Programme in the region.	Partially Accepted Management agrees that continuous attention should be given to improving the operational and financial management to all programmes. However, it does not support the suggested measures, in particular, those regarding the distribution and use of reimbursements for project administrative and operational support (AOS). A comprehensive review of the policy regarding project support costs is being	The strategic planning and monitoring function has been restructured into a single function, integrating regional, subregional and country-level programmes.	RLC	1 Q 2014	N

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	undertaken during 2013-14 at the request of the Finance Committee (JM 2013.2/3 and FC 151/8 refer). Therefore the distribution and use of AOS reimbursements proposed in the second suggested measure cannot be accepted, nor can its use to consolidate a proposed “reserve fund” be agreed (see recommendation 5.1).				
Suggested measures: 1. RLC, with support from OSP, should collect relevant financial information for ongoing monitoring of the progress of operations and portfolio management. Information on expenditure (disbursements) by year, unit of analysis, source of funds and use thereof is vital for regular evaluations of the effectiveness and cost efficiency of the portfolio. This Evaluation made considerable efforts to compile the first database for 2004-2012 and to develop a few indicators for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the portfolio management. FAO could benefit from adopting, adding to, continuing and stepping up such endeavours in the short and medium term.		1. Options for strengthened field programme monitoring will be explored, taking into consideration the actions included in this suggested measure.	OSP, CIO, OSD	2014-15	N

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<p>2. Management of information on AOS should be dramatically restructured as soon as possible. This Evaluation recommends that AOS obtained from field operation support should be clearly and transparently recorded as part of the Field Programme, then rapidly and regularly allocated and under no circumstances retained at Headquarters. The Evaluation recommends that AOS collected should be distributed as follows: a) 60% to the unit responsible for the mobilization of funding; b) 20% to RLC; and c) 20% for Headquarters in Rome. AOS distributed according to the criteria of this recommendation should help to consolidate the "Reserve Fund" described in suggested measure 5.1.</p> <p>3. It is recommended that RLC establish a results-monitoring function associated with regional priorities and those of the CPFs. The region is the most appropriate level for this function.</p>		2. An interim model for the distribution of PSC of emergency projects has been implemented, following the integration of FAO's emergency and development activities. OSD and OSP will work to ensure that AOS modalities are communicated effectively, and understood by all decentralized offices.	RLC, OSP, OSD	2014-15	N
		3. This measure is in line with the corporate approach being rolled-out in 2014 across FAO in support of the implementation of the reviewed Strategic Framework.	RLC, OSD	2014-15	N

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4. It is recommended that FAO maintain a support structure for GRMS at RLC and the development of all modules, with a view to helping improve efficiency in regional operations.		4. Regional offices have formulated their GRMS support plans for the first half of 2014. FAO's Programme Executive Board oversees GRMS roll-out and implementation. A longer-term support process will be developed in 2014.	CS, RLC	2014-15	N (for currently planned modules)
5. Given the growing importance of the Field Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the fact that it is increasingly funded by contributions from the region's own countries, RLC, with the support of TCS, should develop an institutional resource-mobilization strategy that includes assigning specialized officers for the strategy and the close involvement of Country Representatives. An integrated approach to the role of FAO in South-South cooperation should be devised in this context. The mobilization of resources should be included as a strategic sector in CPFs and in the recruitment of Country Representatives and Technical Officers in the region.		5. Regional and subregional offices are responsible for leading resource mobilization efforts in decentralized offices in line with FAO's Resource Mobilization and Management Strategy (RMMS). TCS will continue to provide support to offices in the region and to ensure that resource mobilization efforts are coordinated across the Organization.	RLC, TCS	2014-15	N

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<u>Recommendation 7</u> - It is recommended that Regional Management improve the design and implementation of field project evaluation, as well as implementing mechanisms to ensure improve management of knowledge and normative products generated by decentralized offices. Suggested measures: 1. In terms of specific projects evaluated, it is recommended that the heads of Multidisciplinary Teams and Country Representatives ensure a design guaranteed to have an impact on national policy at the local or national level. As far as the pilot project developed as part of Strategic Objective 1 is concerned, it is recommended that RLC carry out an exhaustive evaluation of the design, processes and results before implementing it at the regional level. 2. As for the production and dissemination of normative products, it is recommended that RLC centralizes the material available on a website, informs potential users and includes a counter of searches and downloads to monitor usage. The information	Accepted		RLC, DDN	2014-15	N
		1. The project cycle is being reviewed in order to streamline formulation and sharpen the results focus.	OSD, RLC (in collaboration with SO1)	2014-15	N
		Suggested measures 2-4: Action will be taken to strengthen the management of knowledge and related normative products in the region through greater collaboration and dialogue, Internet-based	RLC	2014-15	N

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<p>strategy should use adverts and summaries that appeal directly to the target audience. The communications strategy should define target populations and diversify the channels used.</p> <p>3. In order to improve knowledge management, it is recommended that RLC incorporate systematized experiences into the monitoring and evaluation system that has been developed.</p> <p>4. As far as project-level activities are concerned, Regional Management, Country Representatives and Technical Officers should guarantee the conditions for combining the active participation of women with the responsibilities they bear in everyday life and the social roles they perform.</p>		tools and an outreach strategy, including a strengthened monitoring and evaluation system, while involving more women in positions of responsibility.			

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5. It is recommended that RLC, with support from LEG, review the potential of technical commissions and defines a strategy to define their future work and role in such intergovernmental forums.		5. A review of technical commissions is underway, for eventual consideration by Members.	LEG, TDs,ROs	2014-15	N
Recommendation 8 - FAO should immediately produce an action plan for eliminating existing gender inequality, including goals, targets, time frames and resources. There should be a substantial increase in the number of women among Country Representatives, and women should also reach higher salary brackets (given that they have the required skills).	Accepted	Action plan will be prepared.	RLC, in collaboration with ESP, OHR, OSD	end 2014	N