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Evaluation Brief

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Evaluation of FAO's work in livestock production, policy and information

The growing role of livestock

The livestock sector has been by far the fastest growing subsector in agriculture over the past several decades, caught in the midst of what has been termed the "livestock revolution". Worldwide, per capita consumption of livestock products increased by 40 percent between 1982 and 1994, but this figure masks a much more important trend: while consumption in developed countries grew by only 1 percent per year, in developing countries this figure was 5.4 percent (a total increase of 88 percent in 12 years).

Increases in this rate are mainly being met through an increase in intensive systems of production, which has raised concerns about the impact on the environment, potential negative effects on the poor, and the increased risk of animal diseases (which in some cases affect humans as well). Outbreaks of epizootics (animal epidemics) and diseases passing from animals to humans raise the spectre of increasingly stringent health requirements and standards in international trade. While increasing trade is the main priority for many countries, the livelihoods of small-scale producers may be adversely affected by the tightening regulations.

As the UN agency mandated to take responsibility for development of the livestock sector, FAO has a unique role to play in this increasingly complex environment. However, simple provision of technologies no longer has a major impact in many countries and identifying appropriate interventions requires the monitoring of global trends, identification of the most appropriate institutional frameworks and assessment of the implications of policies, all of which require trans-sectoral knowledge.

Given the growing size and impact of the livestock sector, and in particular the key role of livestock production in poverty alleviation and food security, a Programme Evaluation of FAO's activities in livestock production, policy and information was undertaken in 2004 (work in animal health was the subject of another programme evaluation in 2001). The evaluation team considered how FAO's Animal Production and Health Division (AGA) was meeting demands in this challenging environment by drawing on skills both within AGA and elsewhere within and outside of FAO. The evaluation team visited 21 countries in all developing regions and spent considerable time reviewing normative and technical work done in FAO headquarters and regional offices. Extensive discussions were held not only with FAO staff but with partners, beneficiaries, Member Governments, NGOs and other agencies working with livestock issues.

The mission of FAO's Livestock Programme

The Programme has stated its mission to be *to clarify and facilitate the role of the livestock subsector in poverty reduction, improved food security, improved food safety, as well as in safe trade in livestock and animal products while safeguarding environmental sustainability and biodiversity*. The evaluation suggested further refining this to underline the two major areas of intervention of the programme: mitigating negative effects and maximizing benefits of the livestock revolution, and strengthening

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livestock's role in food security and poverty alleviation. The focus is on analysis and provision of knowledge in the livestock subsector under a wide-ranging mandate, from poverty alleviation to international trade, public health and the environment.

The major Programme activities in production, policy and information are:

- global livestock sector analysis, studies, guidelines and workshops for decision support for policy and strategy, in particular to favour smallholder (poor) livestock systems, for improved standards and safety, and for better integration of livestock and environmental issues;
- development of a global information system in support of the livestock sector, in particular with the objective of supporting sector analysis and policy work;
- direct technological advice for smallholder livestock production and processing, for food safety and standards, and for better integration of livestock and environmental concerns; and
- development of the Global Strategy for the Management of Animal Genetic Resources, of which the major element is preparation of the publication on the *State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, including country capacity building for national status reports.

A major part of the Programme benefits from high levels of extra-budgetary funding from a variety of donors, in particular the pro-poor policy work, the livestock and environment work and to a lesser extent the work in animal genetic resources.

Findings

The evaluation found that FAO's Livestock Programme is coherent with the evolution of the livestock sector on a global basis and with the Millennium Development Goals. It is also well in tune with the evolution of FAO towards a greater focus on normative and policy considerations in its work as well as with the Organization's Strategic Framework. The evaluation commended the Programme's focus on a "public goods" framework, although it still found room for improvement in strategic planning.

FAO's Livestock Programme is on the forefront of change in FAO with the creation of an internal Policy Unit and has exhibited the ability to attract significant donor funding for normative work. However, the evaluation also found that there is unmet potential for more effective inclusion of livestock in the work of other FAO units and greater visibility for livestock work in general, given its growing importance.

FAO's work is highly appreciated in countries where it is active, but overall it was found that the Organization lacked the resources for effective country coverage and in general the programme lacked visibility at the global level. There was little evidence of a strategic or programmatic approach in the field activities, and it was found in many cases that technological interventions could have had greater impact had they been more closely linked to policy support activities.

Overall, the FAO Livestock Programme was assessed to be among the more progressive and innovative of the Organization, working hard to develop and implement new modalities to adapt to a changing environment in rural development work. The Programme has made good progress in identifying the challenges and opportunities of the dynamic livestock sector. The changes to be implemented in the Medium-Term Plan 2006-2011 are a positive step towards a vision focusing on the provision of information and assistance to policy. However, this provides broad generalizations and it is important to define exactly what FAO can contribute to both areas (information and policy).

Overall, the eight-person evaluation team gave this programme their strong endorsement, concluding that FAO's role in this sector continues to be critical, and that the efforts being made to sharpen the focus and strategy of the Programme's activities are moving it in the right direction.

Recommendations

The Programme's Mission supports FAO's focus on food security, while explicitly recognizing the livestock revolution as the main driver of the livestock sector in many member countries. The path towards reaching the vision will require further elaboration, identifying areas where the Livestock Programme can be proactive and add value, drawing on FAO's areas of comparative advantage in setting norms and standards and in analysis (for example, analysis of livestock trends from global to local scales, and of the design of institutional frameworks to help the rural poor). There may be a need to agree on explicit organizational policy or guidelines, and there will definitely be a continuing need to work closely with the other major institutions working in this area, such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the International Livestock Research Institute.

The evaluation endorsed proposed changes in Programme direction as of 2006, taking FAO livestock work towards a more coherent strategy based on the MDGs and the three areas of public good: equity (poverty); environment (natural resources); and veterinary public health. The Programme will have a strengthened focus on provision of information and assistance to policy development, supported by technical interventions where these can have the widest impact. In this, the Livestock Programme has been in the forefront of FAO's move towards greater focus on information and policy and less on technology transfer. In the area of policy change, the evaluation found that FAO had a key role to play in:

- providing evidence of the impact of policy change on achieving global goals, particularly poverty reduction and food security;
- identifying where national or regional policies may impact on other countries or regions, especially through trade; and
- facilitating the replication of best practice between countries.

Specific recommendations emerging from the evaluation were aimed at strengthening FAO's capacity to deliver services to member countries, including:

■ **Moving from technology transfer to policy change.** The FAO Programme's work at national level should increasingly be aimed at the policy and strategic levels, whether that assistance is concerned with the commercial-industrial sector or with small farmers. FAO has a strong comparative advantage in supporting policy change in the livestock sector. In order to make a genuine impact in this area, however, efforts should be made to reach beyond FAO's traditional counterparts at the Ministries of Agriculture to seek the attention of higher, more strategic levels of policy-making such as Ministries of Planning or Finance. Technology-based field projects will continue to play a key role, but mainly as instruments to

achieve and support changes in policies, institutions and attitudes.

■ **Using the strategic vision for priority setting in the field programme.** The greater strategic vision being applied by the livestock division at headquarters, based on an international public goods framework, should form the basis for priority setting and a coherent approach to its technical assistance. This would involve consideration of regional and national specificities, and therefore strategy development must involve the direct participation of decentralized staff, bringing in regional and national situations and concerns.

■ **Avoiding excessive expectations from technical and policy assistance activities.** Technical and policy assistance must continue to be a priority but care must be taken to ensure that expectations of response to requests for assistance do not exceed the breadth of staff skills and depth of resources available. More active consideration should be given to FAO adopting a facilitating role rather than always providing this assistance directly, and working through partnerships, particularly at the technology-transfer interface at regional and national levels.

■ **Viewing livestock as part of integrated production systems.** Especially when working with the poor, support to livestock production should be closely integrated with a full farm livelihoods approach rather than conducted as a discreet technical area. Policies should ensure the coherent and effective integration of livestock activities into overall smallholder agricultural assistance, as one aspect of production among several others.

■ **Constitution of stronger decentralized technical teams in FAO regional offices.** There is a need for FAO to have strong technical support available closer to the developing countries. The best location is at the Regional Office level, where regional core teams with three international professionals and additional national staff would allow more complete coverage, ease the burden on headquarters and provide countries with more complete and easily available technical support.

■ **Rationalizing genetic resources work.** Work on animal genetic resources should be clarified and strengthened in two ways. First, the work must scale back its focus on conservation issues in order to accelerate the evolution towards utilization, including breeding, biotechnology and biosecurity and exchange of genetic resources. Second, work on animal genetic resources should be given a more prominent place within FAO by being linked better with the rest of the genetic resources and biodiversity work, especially that involving plants.

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Peer review

A panel of external international experts in the livestock field were asked to review the evaluation conclusions and provide their insight to assist FAO to make best use of them. The panel endorsed the public goods approach that FAO has adopted and commended the three high-profile initiatives in the livestock sector which the livestock division is leading: Conservation and Management of Animal Genetic Resources, the Pro-Poor Livestock Policy Initiative and the Livestock, Environment and Development Initiative. The Panel broadly accepted the recommendations of the report, stressing the areas of interdisciplinarity, farm animal genetic resources and priority setting for the field programme. It noted that FAO needs to clarify respective roles in the livestock sector with other actors (institutional, civil society and the private sector) to ensure coordination and complementarity.

Management response to the evaluation

FAO management also broadly endorsed the recommendations, and in particular the focus on development goals rather than production systems. In their response, management included a plan, with timing and responsibilities, for implementing the accepted evaluation recommendations.

Member country representatives in the Programme Committee found the report useful. The extent of extra-budgetary resources mobilized by the programme, in particular for normative work, was a demonstration of the Programme's importance for member countries and the high regard in which they held its work. In concurring in general with the recommendations, they noted that management and the peer review panel had also largely agreed with the evaluation report and that management was moving to implement the recommendations.

FAO Governing Bodies' conclusions (Programme Committee)

References

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