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para la
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y la
Alimentación

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Evaluation of Partnerships and Alliances

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Evaluation of FAO's Cross-Organizational Strategy Broadening Partnerships and Alliances

July 2005

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Acronyms

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
Agenda 21	Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
AGORA	Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture
AMAD	Agricultural Market Access Database
APRACA	Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCA	Common country assessment
CCRF	Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
CEB	United Nations System's Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CFC	Common Fund for Commodities
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIAT	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
CO	country office
Codex	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CUREMIS	Current and Emerging Issues for Economic Analysis and Policy Research
DOALOS	United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EoL	Exchange of Letters
ERP	Education for Rural People
ESC	FAO Commodities and Trade Division
ETC Group	Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration
Ex-Co	Executive Committee
FAOSTAT	Corporate Database for Substantive Statistical Data
FIVIMS	Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System
FMFH	Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger (FAO and UNESCO initiative)
FODEPAL	Regional Technical Project for Training in Economics and Agrarian Policies Cooperation and Rural Development in Latin America
FPMIS	Field Programme Management Information System
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEMS	Global Environmental Monitoring System
GPA	Global Programme of Action (for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities)
GTOS	Global Terrestrial Observing System
HLCM	High-level Committee on Management

HLCP	High-Level Committee on Programmes
IAAH	International Alliance Against Hunger
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IARCs	International Agricultural Research Centers
ICB	International Commodity Body
ICLARM	WorldFish Centre (formerly the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management)
ICP	Industry Cooperative Programme
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International financing institution
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGGs	Intergovernmental Group on Commodity Problems
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INFOFISH	Intergovernmental Organization for Marketing Information and Technical Advisory Services for Fishery Products in the Asia and Pacific Region
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
IPC	International NGO/CSO Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
IPGRI	International Plant Genetic Resources Institute
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
ITC	International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO
ITF	Input Trade Fair
IT-PGR	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organizations
IWG	Intergovernmental Working Group for the Voluntary Guidelines
IYM	International Year of Mountains
LADA	Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
LoA	Letter of Agreement
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisations Performance Assessment Network
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTP	Medium Term Plan
NARS	National Agricultural Research System

NENARNAP	Near East and North Africa Regional Network for Agricultural Policies
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NGO/CSO	Non-governmental and Civil Society Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PIC	Prior Informed Consent
PIRES	Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation System
PPRC	Programme and Project Review Committee
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PS	Private sector
RI	Research Institution
RO	Regional Office
RO/SRO	Regional and Subregional Office
R-t-F	Right-to-Food
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADN	Unit for Strategic Policy Advice on the UN System
SARD	Sustainable agricultural and rural development
SC	Sponsorship Committee
SDA	Rural Development Division
SEAGA	Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Programme
SETSAN	Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPC	Strategic Partnership Committee
SPS	Sanitary and phytosanitary measures
SRO	Sub-Regional Office
TBT	Technical barriers to trade
TCDN	FAO Unit for Cooperation with the Private Sector and NGOs
TCDS	FAO Resources and Strategic Partnerships Unit
TCI	FAO Investment Centre Division
UN	United Nations
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference for Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
UNGLS	United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNSNRDFS	United Nations System Network on Rural Development and Food Security
WARDA	The Africa Rice Center
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit
WFS:fy1	World Food Summit: five years later
WG	Working Group
WHO	World Health Organization
WRI	World Resources Institute

Preface

Since the completion of this evaluation, the Director-General presented his proposals for reform of the Organization to FAO Members at the Council and Conference in 2006 and these proposals are now being further discussed in the regional conferences. In the proposals, strong emphasis is given to strengthening and developing collaboration with external agencies. A greater focus on the Organization's impact will be achieved through expanding alliances, partnerships and joint programmes. There are three main considerations underpinning the strategy presented by the Director-General for this:

- Acknowledgement of the emergence of key players in developing country agriculture and rural development, including the increasingly prominent role played by the private sector in services and production, as well as the increasing role of civil society organizations in development assistance and advocacy;
- Strengthening relationships with UN organizations and regional and sub-regional bodies at all levels, especially at country level to work for the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals; and
- Development of centres of excellence as a means of expanding the Organization's knowledge base and outreach.

These considerations are in line with the thrusts against which the Strategic Objective of Broadening Partnerships and Alliances has been assessed.

The series of documents presenting the Director-General's proposals for reform do not provide information on modalities and more specific strategies at the level of detail of the findings and recommendations in this evaluation. However, several of the proposed changes in organizational structure which are now under implementation go largely in the same direction, including:

- unification of all UN relationships in a single unit;
- positioning collaboration with civil society organizations in a division with a clear partnership mandate in the International Alliance Against Hunger (IAAH), hence, implicitly, giving a more content-driven basis to the relationships;
- an institutional home to foster knowledge networks with centres of excellence; and
- the positioning of the IAAH and the UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security in a single division.

The Evaluation Team considers that the implementation of these changes will help to strengthen work towards the strategic objective on broadening partnerships and alliances. However, changes in the structure are not sufficient by themselves. They should not undermine the need to think more strategically and adjust the Organization's relationships with some of its partners, in particular those for whom the roles in the international context have evolved substantially in the past decades. In this regard, it is hoped that the findings and recommendations contained in this report will help refine and improve the results from the Organization's work in partnership with others.

Executive Summary

- i. All major UN Conferences and Summits have affirmed that partnerships at all levels are essential for progress in overcoming hunger and poverty, promoting economic and social development, and conserving the environment. Promoting public-private partnerships is at the heart of the Secretary-General's reforms, and "Building a global partnership for development" is the eighth of the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the Millennium Assembly in September 2000. Many international organizations, particularly within the UN System, have responded to this call by moving towards increased collaboration among themselves and with fewer traditional actors.
- ii. FAO has not been an exception to this trend. The problems to be addressed have become increasingly complex; the crucial and complementary roles of civil society and the private sector on the international scene were recognized; the participation of these new actors in the global governance structure, their responsibilities and their accountability became problematic; and members exerted pressure for the Organization to focus its work in areas of comparative advantage with increasingly reduced resources. As a result, Broadening Partnerships and Alliances is one of the Cross-Organizational Strategies set forth in the *Strategic Framework 2000-2015*, and further elaborated in the *Medium Term Plans 2004-09* and *2006-11*. The documents set forward a strategy composed of three axes, each referring to a category of partner (UN organizations, IFIs, and other inter-governmental organizations (IGOs); civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and the private sector). This evaluation assessed how the Organization has implemented this strategy, in order to provide an improved framework for decision-making in FAO priorities, modalities and selection of partners, particularly with respect to newer forms of partnership.
- iii. For the purposes of the evaluation, "partnerships" and "alliances" refer to ***cooperation and collaboration between FAO units and external parties in joint or coordinated action for a common purpose***. This involves a relationship where all parties make a contribution to the output and the achievements of the objectives, where resources are complementary and where risk is shared, rather than a solely financial relationship. In order to keep the evaluation within a manageable scope, emphasis is placed on global partnerships and partnerships with non-state actors, which have assumed a particular importance in recent global commitments, and where it was felt that guidance was most needed. Rather than providing a comprehensive assessment of partnerships, the report tries to identify issues, strengths and weaknesses in current practices.
- iv. To carry out its work, the evaluation team used a combination of materials and tools: review of independent evaluations and recent auto-evaluations and surveys; structured interviews with FAO staff involved in partnerships, FAO's partners, and staff of other UN organizations; surveys of FAO Departments, decentralised offices and a sample of Civil Society Organizations; case studies; and a Private Sector Panel, composed of individuals working in the food industry, who provided views to the Team on how they perceived FAO as a partner and the challenges they face in working in poor countries.
- v. The Team had difficulty in obtaining a comprehensive picture of FAO's partnerships. One reason was a lack of a common understanding of partnerships, defined here as voluntary associations of entities. In addition, the Organization lacks a consolidated source of information on these initiatives. Unless there is agreement on the type of relationships being dealt with, and until a channel for sharing information and experiences is established, it will be difficult to anchor partnerships in areas of organizational priorities and comparative advantages. This could result in loss of coherence and efficiency and dispersal of effort.
- vi. FAO works intensively in collaboration with other organizations, both horizontally (looking for complementarities) and vertically (on upstream and downstream initiatives), but more often at headquarters than at country level. Partners are mostly inter-governmental

organizations and research institutions, but the Organization works increasingly with less traditional non-state actors.

vii. When partnering with FAO, external actors look for the Organization's convening role and ability to work with multiple constituencies, the world-wide information resource it provides, and its outreach. By contrast, only some partners (particularly research institutions) look for FAO's expertise, and then only in the specific areas of work where FAO is a recognised technical leader.

viii. There is a general sense of satisfaction with FAO as a partner. However, the lack of flexibility in the use and availability of resources has sometimes undermined the effectiveness of partnerships, and conveyed the impression that the Organization is insufficiently prepared for active management and contribution to partnerships.

ix. Overall, FAO's partnerships with **CSO/NGOs** are constructive, especially in the framework of international policy fora, where CSO/NGOs have demonstrated professionalism and technical competence, complementing FAO's expertise in some cases and/or filling gaps in others. In implementing programmes jointly with CSO/NGOs, the Organization benefits from their broad outreach and their capacity for advocacy by repackaging FAO's normative work for non-specialized audiences and the general public. However, CSO/NGOs are an evolving and complex category which includes a broad range of actors, representing diverse groups and views in society. The Organization should pay more careful attention to representativity, and be more open and more inclusive in its dealings with CSO/NGOs. This is all the more important in that FAO is particularly appreciated by this category for its neutral broker role. In order to do so, FAO consequently needs to strengthen its corporate knowledge.

x. The number of **private sector** partnerships as defined for this evaluation is low, mostly found in expert consultation and data exchange activities and, to a lesser extent, in policy dialogue and regulatory framework processes. There are very few examples of FAO, large companies and farmers' organizations working together for the direct benefit of the rural poor. The mobilization of resources from the private sector for FAO's work has also been very limited. The private sector policy formulated in 2000 has been insufficiently communicated across the Organization, and corporate efforts to implement it have not been substantive. The strategy for partnering with the private sector should be revised on the basis of increased mutual knowledge between FAO and these partners. It should differentiate among private sector partners and indicate what can realistically be gained from working with each of them, taking into account the UN System experience, especially within the framework of the Global Compact. It should also fully recognize the importance of the role of the private sector in enhancing growth and development, while carefully addressing the reputation risks associated with these partnerships. It will recognize the limited potential for companies, as distinct from private foundations, to financially support FAO work. An effective implementation will require staff training and capacity development.

xi. FAO forms part of the constellation of entities composing the UN system, and this is a main driving force behind FAO collaboration with other **UN organizations**. Collaboration with the UN is significant, often institutional, and encompasses a wide range of relationships. In particular, FAO has proven to be an active and positive player in the various inter-agency coordination mechanisms, and has established successful bilateral partnerships with various agencies, though not all UN organizations perceive FAO as being open to partnerships and new opportunities. Partnerships are particularly fruitful in programmes of high relevance to member countries, when embedded in the Organization's Regular Programme of work, and for which division of labour and complementarity among partners is natural and based on respective mandates. However, there is an undesirable tendency for FAO to overshadow partners when taking the lead, in particular when it hosts the secretariat.

xii. Greater difficulties in partnering with the UN System organizations have been found at country level. Despite a generally positive appreciation of FAO's increased participation in

system-wide mechanisms, the weaknesses of the UN coordination and collaboration systems and the country offices' limited financial and human resources impede FAO country representatives from playing a full role. In addition, progress found in collaboration among the Rome-based agencies at global level has not yet been fully translated at the working level. The evaluation supports increased country level partnerships, and recommends that the Rome-based agencies strengthen collaboration by reaching a three-way consensus, recognizing synergies, and establishing a clear division of labour and respective capacities.

xiii. FAO's main partners are **research and academic institutions**. Relationships with the CGIAR and its 15 International Agricultural Research Centres are especially intense, and the assessment is positive overall. However, problems have arisen from the lack of adequate mutual understanding and risk of overlapping of roles, as well as from the limited permeation through the Organization of experiences and lessons learned by the various divisions. In-house and joint FAO-CGIAR mechanisms for exchanging information and taking stock of these relationships are recommended.

xiv. The Organization's multiple relations with other research institutions have concerned discrete activities and projects, often not conceived through strategic and programmatic approaches. Due to the lack of corporate guidelines or criteria for selecting these partners and governing the partnerships, relations have been established on an *ad-hoc* basis, with the various divisions adopting their own modalities. These relationships should be periodically reviewed, and efforts to establish a corporate policy for designating FAO reference centres should continue, in order to avoid incoherent and fragmented approaches.

xv. The Evaluation Team believes that the current **management structure of FAO's partnerships** does not optimally carry forward FAO's strategy in this area. There is a restricted concept of what the Organization should look for in partnerships, which tend to be looked to primarily for increasing extra-budgetary resources. In addition, sharing of responsibilities for relations with UN System organizations does not adequately reflect the evolutions occurring within UNDG, CEB and the High-Level Committees, resulting in overlapping of functions among services. The structure should be reformed, in order to allow more central access to information, strategic planning and corporate policy on partnerships at senior management level, while the substantive aspect of partnerships should be guaranteed by embedding work in technical departments.

xvi. Partnerships with non-state actors whose interests may diverge from those of FAO entail **risks** to the Organization's neutrality, objectivity and credibility. The risk is particularly high when partnering with the private sector and NGOs concerned with specific issues, especially in the provision of expert advice and funding. The Organization must also safeguard itself from being associated with actors which have a negative public image.

xvii. Managing these risks should entail weighing the negative factors against the positive ones and responsibilities for increasing cost-effectiveness. Proposals for collaboration with the private sector have, so far, been mainly for small amounts and minor activities, while the screening processes are time-consuming. The report makes recommendations for enhancing the transparency, objectivity and neutrality of the process for selecting partners. It suggests establishing a set of criteria applicable during a "pre-screening" process and paying attention to the potential partner's positive factors. It also recommends weighing risk against opportunity, and adjusting the screening process to the significance of the initiative.

xviii. If FAO is to keep its role as a neutral broker, it should strive to **adjust the balance** between the constituencies with which it collaborates. This requires, among other things, being more inclusive in the selection of partners, in particular non-state actors. Efforts to increase the presence of small and medium enterprises, national civil society organizations and research institutions, for example, or to even out the gap between participation of NGO/CSOs and the

private sector, will contribute to their representativity, and enhance the Organization's legitimacy and credibility.

xix. Efforts must also be made **to increase the FAO country representatives' capacity** to partner. Although issues such as the limited access to enter into partnerships in the field are hard to tackle, the Organization can make efforts to devise facilitating procedures and support measures. For example, increased flexibility in the use of resources would probably render the country offices more adaptable to partners' operational procedures, and would allow them to better decide on the human and financial investments to dedicate to partnerships.

xx. All external and internal trends converge towards an increasing necessity for partnering, in particular at country level, in the context of the UN Reform and for an optimal implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In addressing these challenges, the Organization will have to be more strategic in the way it engages in partnerships, assessing partners, purposes and modalities that are best suited for improving FAO's performance in achieving its mission. FAO's corporate strategy, its approach to partnerships with external actors, and the related policies and guidelines need, therefore, to be refined in order to ensure that the Organization's priorities come to bear in partnerships and that fragmented efforts are avoided.

xxi. Some important lessons have been learned regarding factors that exert positive influence on partnerships, and should drive prioritization and decision-making in partnerships. They include:

- high political commitment;
- substantial regular programme resources;
- generation of an innovative product;
- a confined domain of intervention and clear boundaries to the intended outputs and outcomes;
- equality in power and resources or attention to the inequality in the design of the partnership;
- absence of competition with other partnerships;
- formal and informal structures of communication and decision-making at operational and policy levels;
- partners have their own funding sources or funding is consensually apportioned among partners;
- an appropriate institutional home;
- partnership facilitators have mediation, negotiation and communication skills;
- a manageable number of partners;
- consideration to different organizational cultures and values;
- controversial and complex issues or new interpretative frameworks at the heart of the partnership.

xxii. Moreover, the Organization needs to balance costs, including risks and benefits, of partnerships, and ensure that capacity and resources are available to engage in them. It will also need to be pro-active in learning from its partners, especially non-conventional ones, and in turn, better communicating its mission to others.

I. Introduction

A. BACKGROUND

1. It has been confirmed by all major UN Conferences and Summits that effective partnerships at international, regional, national and local levels are essential if progress is to be made in overcoming hunger and poverty, promoting economic and social development, and conserving the environment. “*Partnership for Development*” is one of the eight goals of the UN Millennium Development Declaration adopted by the Millennium Summit in 2000, and emphasizes the roles of the private sector and civil society in the global development agenda. The goal recognizes that “*bringing the strengths, capacities, approaches, skills and methods of different actors can create powerful synergies and overcome many of the barriers to sustainable development*”¹.

2. Thus, in the past decade, many international organizations, including those within the UN system, have moved steadily towards increased collaboration with other actors. Among the most important factors driving this trend in FAO are:

- the need to address increasingly complex problems that the Organization cannot address by itself, and to deal with these issues from a cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary perspective;
- the recognition of the crucial and complementary roles of civil society and the private sector in the development process, in the context of a changing role of the State, which is increasingly concentrating on protection and regulatory functions and phasing out from market intervention;
- linked to the above, the issue of open governance, with greater responsibility and accountability to all elements of society; and
- pressure on the Organization to work more in areas of its perceived comparative advantage and produce more with increasingly limited resources.

3. As a result, in its *Strategic Framework 2000-2015*, the Organization emphasizes partnerships in the cross-organizational strategy “Broadening Partnerships and Alliances”. The *FAO Medium Term Plan 2006-11* further focuses on enhanced cooperation with: (i) the UN System organizations, inter-governmental organizations at global and national levels; (ii) NGOs and CSOs through joint information activities, increased participation in policy dialogue and cooperation in FAO’s normative and operational activities; (iii) the private sector; and (iv) cooperation with local authorities through the joint development of poverty alleviation programmes at local level.

4. Today, many of the Organization’s normative programmes and field activities at global, regional and national levels are implemented with partners. FAO has developed partnerships and alliances with a broad range of organizations through various modalities and instruments and for various purposes. A first survey of FAO technical departments indicated more than 830 collaborative arrangements with external partners. Most of them fit to one of the broad categories of partnership defined in the Strategic Framework.

5. At its eighty-ninth session in May 2003, the Programme Committee approved FAO’s programme of strategic and programme evaluations for the 2004-2005 biennium, including the evaluation of FAO’s cross-organizational strategy “Broadening Partnerships and Alliances”. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide the membership and secretariat with the basis to strengthen FAO priorities, modalities and selection of partners, particularly with respect to newer forms of partnership.

¹ GA 58 session: A/58/227 Enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector, 18 August 2003.

B. WHAT IS A PARTNERSHIP?

6. Partnerships can exist between two or more individuals and/or organizations. A partnership is a kind of *relationship* that may vary in formality. For example, the relationship may be so precisely articulated that the partnership itself has a degree of legal status, or it may be expressed so informally that the partners themselves have difficulty articulating the terms of their partnership.

7. The term “partnership” is used in many ways and encompasses a broad range of relationships. There are definitions of partnership in various UN documents, dictionaries, and other sources. There are common elements in these definitions that are summarized below.

8. A partnership is:

- a voluntary association of partners (= members)
- with a common interest (= purpose)
- and complementary resources (= participation)
- who agree to carry on an enterprise (= modality)
- through which each partner intends to realize benefits (= incentive/motive)
- and for the sake of which they are willing to share risks.

9. The purpose is the end to be attained. The modality is the means agreed by the partners to bring that end about. The incentive arises from the partners’ own perspective of that end and incites them to assume risk for the common interest. It should be noted that partners may benefit from the activity of partnerships itself, even if the end is not achieved.

10. The concepts of **complementarity** and assumption of **risk** help to distinguish partnerships from merely contractual relationships. The balance between benefits and assumed risks is key to the life of the partnership, and both affect participation of the members. A partnership with minimal risk but which does not generate meaningful benefits for the partners will cease to exist. The same is true for a partnership that produces meaningful results but the liabilities of which outweigh those benefits, whereas a partnership which produces meaningful benefits for the partners, outweighing associated risks, is likely to thrive. Moreover, such a partnership will probably generate trust among its members as they prove themselves reliable in risky situations. The production of both meaningful benefits and **trust** among the partners is important to building and strengthening partnerships and alliances, because it encourages partners to assume greater risk in exchange for greater benefits. Finally, though partners need not be equal in a partnership - one may contribute/gain more than another -, being a partner does imply a **degree of ownership and control** over the management of the partnership. Partnership also brings with it aspects of both **negotiation** - particularly in the early stages of creating the partnership - and **joint decision-making** during the life of the partnership. These factors further help differentiate partnerships from procurement and other kinds of contracts.

11. The approach taken to partnership in this evaluation takes into account the concepts and features elaborated above (see Box 1).

Box 1. Definition of Partnerships and Alliances

For the purpose of the evaluation, “partnerships and alliances” refer to cooperation and collaboration between FAO units and external parties in joint or coordinated action for a common purpose. It involves a relationship where all parties make a contribution to the output and the achievement of the objectives rather than a solely financial relationship.

C. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

C.1 Approach

12. The report adopts a *strategic* approach to partnerships. The analysis was conducted with a view to gathering lessons learned, taking into account FAO's experience and current trends in policies and practices in partnerships. As stated in the Terms of Reference of the evaluation, the purpose of this exercise is to "provide the membership and secretariat with the basis to strengthen FAO priorities, modalities and selection of partners, particularly with respect to newer forms of partnership²." Thus, the report does not provide a comprehensive assessment of partnerships but rather tries to highlight where issues, strengths and weaknesses are in the current practices.

13. Similarly, the cases presented have been chosen to illustrate the findings presented in the report.

C.2 Scope

14. The Terms of Reference purposely limited the number and type of partnerships to be analyzed, in order to keep the evaluation within a manageable scope. Only initiatives and relationships responding to the definition of "partnership" in paragraph 8 were taken into account. In addition, standard institutional arrangements derived from FAO's participation in the UN System, relationships that are limited to loose information-sharing networks or FAO-led discussion fora, and FAO Partnership Programmes aimed at tapping individuals' expertise were excluded from the analysis. Less emphasis was placed on partnerships at country, regional and sub-regional levels, because they are less numerous, though by no means less important. In addition, analyzing partnerships at decentralized level would have required another methodology.

15. Private sector sponsorship of FAO activities is discussed. Although the Terms of Reference explicitly excluded contractual relationships of a purely financial nature, this particular type of relationship with the private sector was alluded to in interviews with all stakeholders and in materials consulted. It has in many ways formed and influenced the Organization's relations with the private sector, and could not be ignored.

C.3 Perspective

16. Partnerships were analyzed from various perspectives, including thematic focus, overall purpose (implementation of activities, sharing of experience, knowledge management, etc.), whether normative or technical assistance activities were involved, whether they were sectoral or inter-sectoral, and whether the scope was national, sub-regional, regional, or global.

17. It quickly became apparent that the most relevant distinction between partnerships was the type of partners involved. The category to which the partner belongs was identified as being the most important determining factor, influencing other factors that characterize the partnership (theme, purpose, modality). In addition, the historical and present contexts are specific to each category of partners and essential to understanding partnerships. The literature review confirms this finding and the *Strategic Framework of FAO 2000-2015* was structured around categories of partner.

18. The evaluation concentrates on the internal dynamics of the partnerships under the assumption that partners invest in a joint initiative if it is fruitful in creating trust, sharing experiences, and building a solid relationship. This in itself is an achievement, and leads to the realization of specific objectives set out at the beginning of the relationship and/or developed over time.

² Terms of Reference, paragraph 13.

19. In order to allow a better understanding of these dynamics behind the partnerships, partners were grouped into the six categories identified in the *Strategic Framework of FAO 2000-2015*. In doing so, attention was paid to the “*different practical modalities and instruments, depending on the context*”³ that may characterize relationships with them. Thus, organizations were broadly grouped according to the constituencies they represent, their governance, the type of activities they carry out, how FAO relates to them, and what the Organization may expect from them in a partnership (see Box 2 for details). The categories do not necessarily correspond to those proposed in the Organization’s various policy documents. They were refined during the evaluation process and are thus intended as tools for the *specific purpose of analyzing partnerships*. They do not exhaust the wide variety of actors FAO works with, nor are they considered exclusive of one another. Certain organizations may belong in more than one category, and others may not belong in any. The existence of grey areas and overlapping between the categories is fully recognized, and approximately 5% of the linkages identified in the *Medium Term Plans 2004-09* and *2006-11* were not included under any category⁴.

Box 2. The Categories of Partners

International Financing Institutions (IFIs):

public international institutions whose main task is the provision of policy advice and financial support to countries and institutions (e.g. loans and grants), such as the World Bank Group (WB), or the Global Environmental Fund (GEF).

United Nations System Organizations (UN):

members of the United Nations System, excluding IFIs. Also included in this group are all inter-agency coordinating mechanisms and working groups within the System. However, inter-governmental mechanisms and secretariats to inter-governmental agreements, born or hosted within the System but with autonomous entity, are excluded from this category.

Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs):

international public institutions responsible to member countries to which they are held accountable, with the exception of institutions responding to the above two definitions (and grouped under one of those headings).

Research Institutions (RIs): institutions devoted exclusively to research and academic activities.

The category also includes networks of research institutions promoting the advancement of science or application of innovative technologies.

However, networks of professionals working in a scientific field have been excluded and grouped with the CSOs, as have been networks of scientific institutions seeking to promote exchange and contacts among the institutions, rather than research per se.

Civil Society (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)⁵:

all non-profit organizations representing sectors of civil society or other non-profit private interests (the “third sector”). Trade unions, think tanks, farmers’ groups and fisherfolk organizations are part of this group, as are associations where government institutions participate, but that do not represent government positions. Industry associations and other not-for-profit institutions representing commercial interests are excluded from this group.

Private Sector (PS): all individual, for-profit, commercial enterprises; the business associations, coalitions and research institutions that represent or accountable to them; and individual, family or corporate philanthropic foundations.

³ Par. 168 of the Strategic Framework.

⁴ The few media organizations with which FAO collaborates are an example of this. These organizations represent 0.6% of FAO’s partnerships at headquarters level.

⁵ In view of the long-standing collaboration of FAO with non-governmental organizations and the wish expressed both to the UN and to FAO by the NGOs to retain such term, as per article 71 of the UN Charter, the expression non-governmental and civil society organizations will be used in this report with its acronym NGO/CSOs.

C.4 Methods

20. The Team made use of various tools, materials and techniques to collect and analyze information on partnerships:

- Documents available: official documents, essays and analyses of partnerships and multi-stakeholder relationships, independent evaluations, recently completed auto-evaluations and surveys.
- Approximately 100 semi-structured interviews, based on a common checklist, were conducted with concerned stakeholders. Interviewees included FAO staff involved in partnerships and the staff and representatives of other organizations partnerships to varying extents with FAO, including UN organizations, the private sector, civil society and research institutions both inside and outside the CGIAR system.
- Various surveys were carried out:
 - a) the relevant departments in FAO responded to a questionnaire on collaborative arrangements;
 - b) all Regional, Subregional and country offices received a set of open questions, inviting them to describe their partnerships, the issues they have faced, and their assessment of the collaboration;
 - c) over 250 civil society organizations which have a working relationship with FAO were invited to respond to a questionnaire assessing how the Organization relates to, and works with, civil society, expressing their priorities on FAO's work, and the potential areas for collaboration.
- A one-day Private Sector Panel was organized involving individuals from major multinational food companies involved in manufacturing and retail. The objectives of the Panel were to get participants' views on challenges they face in working in developing countries, how they perceive FAO as a potential partner, opportunities for partnerships and their recommendations to the Evaluation.
- A number of major partnerships (case studies) were analyzed more in-depth on the basis of common structure and criteria, with a view to drawing lessons on factors of success in partnerships (see Box 3.). These case studies were selected among FAO's major areas of work. Attention was also paid to their potential for being illustrative and for providing lessons that could be generalized.

Box 3. Partnerships selected for Case Studies

Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries
 Code of Conduct for the Distribution and Use of Pesticides
 International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources
 Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security
 International Year of the Mountain – the Mountain Partnership
 Collaborative Partnership on Forest
 Education for Rural People
 Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
 FAOSTAT2
 Agricultural Market Access Database
 Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Mapping System
 UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security
 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative
 Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger
 Education for Rural People
 Africa Stockpile Programme

II. The Strategy

21. The strategy as stated in the *Strategic Framework 2000-2015* has three major axes based on main groups of partners: (i) UN system and other governmental organizations; (ii) CSOs and NGOs; and (iii) the private sector. With regard to partnerships with the UN and IGOs, the strategy mainly aims at “maintaining” levels of coordination and collaboration with other organizations as they are with strengthened cooperation in the cases of the IFIs, the CGIAR and bilateral cooperation. The strategy regarding CSOs and NGOs emphasizes advocacy and contribution to policy debates at all levels. The partnership strategy *vis-à-vis* the private sector recognizes the need to dialogue with the private sector for better mutual understanding and the need to address the risk to reputation potentially associated to partnerships with the private sector. However, the strategy remains broad and vague about the roles the Organization perceives for the private sector other than mobilizing resources.

22. Except for specific policy documents relating to partnerships with the private sector and partnerships with the NGO/CSOs, it is in the *Medium Term Plan 2004-09* that the strategy is most elaborated, providing greater detail and suggesting concrete actions to take. The *Medium-Term Plan 2006-11* places similar emphasis in a much condensed text. The strategy continues to be structured around the same grouping of partners as in the Strategic Framework, with the addition of local authorities as a new type of partners linking sub-national and local authorities in both developing and developed countries⁶.

23. The *Medium Term Plan 2004-09* defines the main thrusts of the strategy as follows:

- To ensure continued fruitful cooperation with UN system partners and other inter-governmental organizations;
- To further expand dialogue and strengthen cooperation with Non-governmental (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), in follow-up to the World Food Summit: five years later, working towards common food security and agricultural development goals;
- To pursue dialogue and develop strategic partnerships with the private sector in potential areas of mutual interest, also facilitating its involvement in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors of developing countries; and
- To develop new forms of cooperation in support of rural development, through partnerships with decentralized (sub-national and local) entities.

24. It also takes into account new developments that affect particularly the UN system, including the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, and new global coordination mechanisms such as the United Nations Development Group. However, it is with the private sector that the *Plan* remains insufficiently precise. No reference is made to the MDG 8 which places emphasis on partnership with the private sector, nor to UN system-wide initiatives such as the Global Compact. Moreover, while the definition of the private sector is correct (from the viewpoint of “economic agents”), such a definition does not reflect clarity about who FAO intends to partner with and to do what. Finally, there is some confusion between FAO actions that fall under technical cooperation in support of these economic agents and partnership *per se* as defined earlier in this report. For the purpose of the assessment and better understanding of who FAO partners with, working definitions of categories of partners will be given in the section on the Overview of FAO’s Partnerships.

⁶ As mentioned in the terms of reference of the Evaluation, this form of partnerships is excluded from the present assessment.

III. Overview of FAO's Partnerships and Alliances

25. The objective of this chapter is to present a general picture of who FAO seeks partnership with and on what terms. It is based on a survey prepared for the purpose of this evaluation⁷. In line with the sources of information available, the following description is divided into four sections.

26. The first one sketches partnerships in the context of the Regular Programme - by far the most significant - as laid out in the Medium Term Plans, and concerns mostly work carried out at headquarters. The information is based on data produced for the *Medium Term Plans 2004-09* and *2006-11*, stored in PIRES. It reflects FAO managers' intentions to involve external actors in their regular programme of work, and links partners to the relevant programme entities and major outputs. These 2120 links with over 300 different organizations allow the presentation of trends and patterns in the Organization's partnerships.

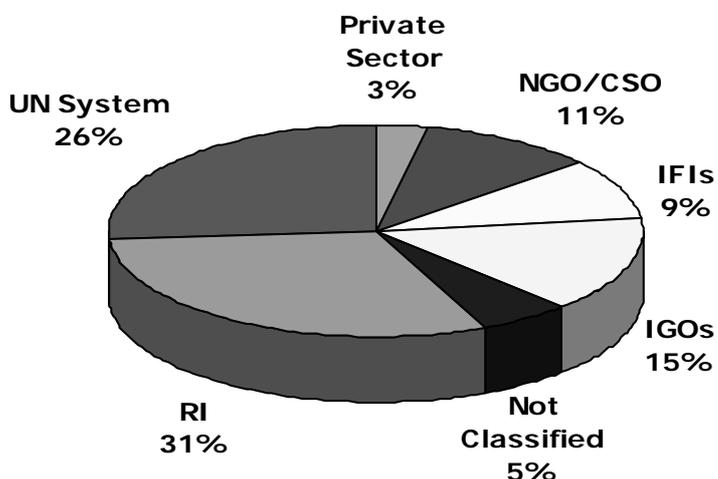
27. The descriptions of partnerships established at regional, subregional and country levels follow, and rely on information provided by the decentralized offices. Information regarding the activities of FAO's 116 decentralized offices was obtained by sending a questionnaire to FAO's regional, subregional and country representatives regarding the partnerships in which they are involved. In their responses, the decentralized offices described their partners and the purposes for which they partner, and also provided a short assessment of these activities⁸.

28. Finally, the overview of the modalities of partnership adopted in FAO is the result of the Team's findings throughout the evaluation process, and was carried out with the collaboration of the Legal Office.

A. REGULAR PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

29. FAO works intensively in collaboration with other organizations for the implementation of its Regular Programme. Indeed, nearly all divisions involve partners in their activities.

Graph 1 Distribution of Partners collaborating with FAO's Regular Programme



30. FAO has more inter-governmental than non-governmental partners (which are involved in less than half of the Organization's Regular Programme of work) (see Graph 1). However, research and academic institutions are the single most significant category of actors collaborating with FAO, both in terms of quantitative significance of the relationships and number of collaborating organizations.

31. By far, FAO's most important partner within this

category is the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and its 15 member International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs). There are multiple linkages at the governance, strategic planning and programmatic levels, for information exchange and normative

⁷ FAO-PBEE Survey of FAO's Partnerships and Alliances.

⁸ Forty replies were received, leading to two samples: one composed of 39 partnerships between 59 partners and 6 Regional and Subregional Offices, and another composed of 64 partnerships involving 22 country offices and over 50 different partners.

and technical activities. They cover the full spectrum of FAO's work⁹ and involve the development of the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources, the livestock, agri-business, biotechnology and seed sectors, and control of transboundary animal diseases.

32. The **UN System** accounts for a quarter of all partnerships. The intensity of these relations varies widely from one agency to another. Three UN System partners (United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme and World Health Organisation) account for over two fifths of all links to UN organizations.

33. The Organization also partners with other **Inter-Governmental Organizations** of various sorts. There is a relatively even split among global and regional bodies, and most (75%) are organizations with highly specific mandates. In particular, almost a fifth are secretariats to international conventions. The wide variety of institutions grouped under this category makes it difficult to establish patterns and trends among them.

34. **International Financial Institutions** are present in virtually all of FAO's programmes. Over half of the collaborative initiatives involve the World Bank, and almost another quarter involves the International Fund for Agricultural Development. These relationships are mostly based on financial arrangements and, as such, are excluded from this Evaluation. However, as subsequent chapters will show, there have been examples of joint undertakings and collaborative work with these organizations at headquarters level.

35. FAO partners with a wide variety of **NGO/CSO** partners: rural and urban people's organizations¹¹, non-governmental organizations and their networks¹², and think tanks. More recently, other types of organizations have been participating in FAO's work, such as human rights organizations and not-for-profit media. The most frequent partners tend to be organizations representing professional sectors and/or organizations with widely recognized expertise in the issues they address and therefore strong capacity for advocacy. Relations usually revolve around international policy and regulatory frameworks and country-level activities. They involve exchanges and collaboration, often connected with project implementation, and usually based on contractual relations.

36. Very few divisions work with the **private sector**. In most cases, the Organization deals with business organizations, coalitions or lobby groups, rather than actual companies; and about 70 of the 200 organizations to which FAO has granted formal status as "International NGOs" are in fact business or industry associations.

Box 4. FAO'S Top Partners¹⁰

WB

UNDP

UNEP

WHO

CGIAR

IFAD

UN

UNESCO

IUCN

CIFOR

WFP

CIRAD

UN CBD

WTO

UNICEF

IUFRO

ILRI

⁹ Sustainable intensification of integrated production systems, land and soil productivity, agricultural water use efficiency and conservation, conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources.

¹⁰ Partners are listed according to the amount of Programme Entities to which they contribute.

¹¹ Producers' associations, cooperatives, credit unions, consumers' organizations, trade unions, professional associations, and faith-based organizations.

¹² Humanitarian, advocacy, development and research organizations from both developing and developed countries.

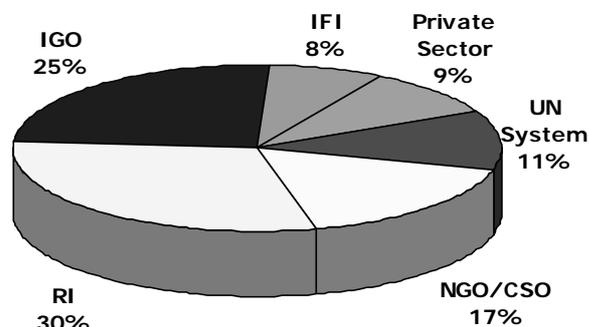
B. REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL OFFICES

37. The majority of partnerships at regional and subregional levels are brokered or initiated by the Regional or Subregional Offices. They are initiatives involving a small number of partners (1-2), or, to a lesser extent, corporate partnerships, established at headquarters and counting on an extremely large number of partners (e.g. World Food Day, Regional Programme for Food Security).

38. FAO partners at this level mainly to create or encourage dialogue, and to stay up-to-date with the activities of other organizations. Other important purposes are the joint formulation and implementation of projects or programmes and the provision of technical support and capacity building to member countries. Advocacy and pooling of resources are among the main benefits resulting from the partnerships, rather than purposes for their establishment.

39. As is the case with the Regular Programme activities carried out by headquarters, RO/SRO partner mostly with research institutions (see Graph 2). However, they work more frequently with NGO/CSOs, and little with IFIs, even less so than with the private sector. RO/SROs' second most frequent partners are IGOs, typically regional bodies with which they undertake joint regional programmes. In contrast, it is fairly rare that they partner with UN System organizations.

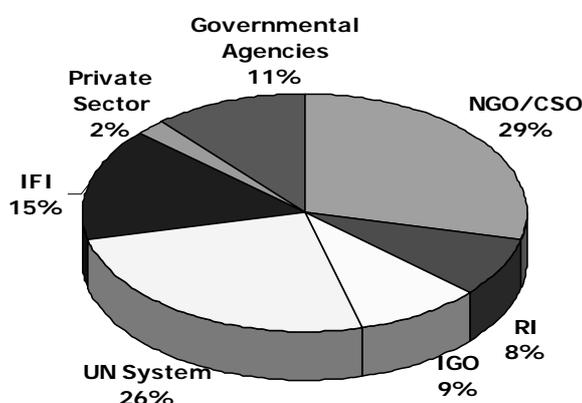
Graph 2. *Distribution of Partners Collaborating with RO/SRO*



C. COUNTRY OFFICES

40. As would be expected of activities in the field, the most important purposes for which country offices (COs) enter partnerships are joint implementation of projects and programmes, provision of technical assistance to governments and raising awareness. Partnerships are also largely established for the broad purpose of coordinating and establishing "general collaboration". Only rarely do COs conduct studies and generate knowledge in partnership, but other normative activities, such as standard-setting, regulation and knowledge management, account for almost a fifth of the partnerships.

Graph 3. *Distribution of Partners Collaborating with COs*



41. Over half of the partnerships at field level concern broad domains of activity such as food security (including implementation of TeleFood projects, elaboration of SPFS or raising awareness on hunger and related issues), while cross-sectoral issues take a second place (health, education, displacement, environment). Clearly, it appears easier to partner in areas that lend themselves to multi-disciplinary approaches, but that relate closely to the Organization's mandate and expertise.

42. Country visits carried out in the framework of other recent evaluations, the various surveys of FAO Representatives, and the interviews conducted throughout the evaluation indicate that, overall, the work carried out in partnerships at the country level is limited. Most are not brokered by the Representations

themselves, but rather work under the umbrella of broad partnerships emerging from the headquarters level. This is especially the case with NGO/CSO and UN System organizations. Examples include TeleFood, World Food Day, International Year of Mountains, school gardens, seed distribution, and initiatives emerging from the UN Country Teams.

43. FAO's main partners at the country level are NGO/CSOs (see Graph 3). Many of these partnerships are formalized under Letters of Agreement, due to the COs' lack of resources to devote to partnerships activities (and need to inscribe them in projects). However, in many instances, behind these contractual formalities lies true collaboration for a common purpose.

44. Over a quarter of the partnerships are established with UN organizations. This figure does not take into account the numerous initiatives undertaken within the context of the UN Country Teams. These are part of the standard UN institutional arrangements, but are by far the most important force behind the contact, exchange and collaboration among UN organizations at field level. Including these activities among the partnerships, would probably make the UN organizations FAO's first partner at the country level, accounting for over half of the joint initiatives.

45. Research institutions and inter-governmental organizations are minor partners for the country offices. An explanation may lie in the limited presence of these actors at the country level. Indeed, National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) are often in decline, and IGOs tend to have little outreach at this level.

46. The private sector, as is the case for the other two levels, is a rare partner for COs, and very few partnerships have been identified. Most of these partnerships are of normative nature, including providing expert advice (participation in advisory groups), contribution to advocacy campaigns and elaboration of studies. Isolated examples of operational activities, such as training, have also been found.

D. MODALITIES OF PARTNERSHIPS

47. Formal agreements, according to the FAO Constitution (Article XIII), may be established between "*the Conference [and] the competent authorities of [international] organizations*". However, the Constitution allows for other working arrangements, which may be established by the Secretariat, provided they keep the Conference informed. These informal arrangements have become the preferred written form of establishing cooperation with other actors and, over time, numerous modalities have developed. While FAO has signed only 17 formal agreements since its foundation, the Exchanges of Letters (EoL), Letters of Intent, Joint Declarations, Memoranda of Understanding, etc., are uncountable - especially since responsibility for partnerships was decentralized in 1999 and no consolidated source of information on all the arrangements to which the Organization is party exists.

48. There is no legal hierarchy between these various forms of arrangements (they are all equally binding for the signatories). They differ solely in terms of the political will and commitment that lie behind them. Practice has made the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) the most common among them. It allows the establishment of a general framework for cooperation, while being flexible enough to allow for various types of collaboration. However, because of the high political profile associated with MoUs, the procedures for agreement and signature tend to be lengthy.

49. Letters of Agreement (LoAs) were originally conceived as a form of contractual agreement between FAO and a Recipient Organization, and the relationships they regulate are, therefore, in principle outside the scope of this report. However, in view of the limited amount of resources available to the decentralized offices, they have become a common way of sanctioning *de facto* partnerships in the field. By inscribing these relationships within the context of the projects under their responsibility, the country offices have made it possible to work with other actors under a written form of agreement and to contribute financially to the joint undertakings.

50. Many partnerships, however, are hardly formalized in written form at all. Indeed, as a few regional and subregional officers have noted, verbal agreements tend to facilitate processes and make them more flexible and dynamic. As a result, only approximately 15% of their partnerships are known to have been formalized under the form of a MoU, LoA or EoL. Informal arrangements not involving financial transactions (i.e. where all partners' contributions are in kind, according to their possibilities and comparative advantages) are also the country offices' preferred modality of partnership. They have noted how flexibility allows for parties to easily adapt to the evolution of the partnership and its context. Thus, advisory boards, networks, fora, committees or working groups have proliferated, especially in the decentralized offices. In these cases, no written document is signed, and no resources are transferred.

IV. Assessment of FAO's Partnerships and Alliances

51. This section presents an analysis of FAO's partnerships by main type of partners, similar to the strategy, with a particular emphasis on non-state partners. It also reviews the institutional supportive mechanism, including strategic and operational management, to pursue the strategy.

A. FAO'S PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (NGO/CSOS)

52. In 2003, the Secretary-General of the UN appointed a panel of eminent persons to take stock of existing practices and recommend improvements in the interaction between the UN and civil society. The panel's report¹³ made recommendations on increasing the participation of NGOs in inter-governmental bodies, establishing a trust fund to increase the participation of representatives of NGOs from developing countries, improving accreditation and dialogue with the United Nations Secretariat and enhancing country-level engagement with NGOs. The report, the UN Secretary-General's response and the views of the NGO community are well known by the FAO units dealing with NGO/CSOs, and were also used to frame the issues for the evaluation.

53. Knowledge about, and relations with the various types of NGO/CSOs lie with different divisions and departments, with the Resources and Strategic Partnerships Unit (TCDS) being the unit responsible for relations with CSO/NGOs and the private sector non-state actors. Furthermore, there are units in charge of relations with the Parliamentarians (Special Advisors to the Director-General), indigenous peoples (Land Tenure Service) and youth (Extension, Education and Communication Service). In addition to the list of INGOs with formal status, there are various lists of NGO/CSOs compiled for different purposes by different divisions. There is no consolidated information on the number and types of organizations FAO works with, both at headquarters and country level, nor on the intensity and frequency of these relations. An internal group of NGO/CSO focal points was established in 2001 with the objective to serve as "FAO's reference and outreach group". Its terms of reference cover three main functions in the areas of "*policy/strategy formulation*", "*information/coordination*" and "*promoting and learning from action*". The group has been inactive for the past year.

54. The new phenomenon affecting the relations between FAO and the NGO/CSOs is the coalescence of NGO/CSOs into transnational social movements and networks, think tanks and global policy networks. Transnational social movements have adherents in several countries and engage in sustained action or advocacy.¹⁴ The International Planning Committee for Food

¹³ UNGA (2004). We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and global governance. Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. New York, United Nations General Assembly. Fifty-eighth session. Agenda item 59. A/58/817.

¹⁴ Transnational social movements are defined here as comprising networks of small groups, associations and organizations; they pursue political aims and extend their patterns of cooperation and influence beyond the nation-state, including their involvement in setting and monitoring of international policy and norms through intergovernmental organizations.

Sovereignty (IPC) is a network which includes such movements. It was formed at the time of the *World Food Summit: five years later*, and has become FAO's main interlocutor for NGO/CSOs on the World Food Summit follow-up. The IPC is a network of networks grouping about 50 NGO organizations including those of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, women, youth, indigenous people and agricultural workers. It reaches thousands of members through a decentralised structure and has a plan of action on food security and agriculture.

55. Think tanks and global policy networks are professionally committed to the production and dissemination of information and knowledge, often through action research and debating fora. Think tanks which have been collaborating with FAO for many years include the World Resources Institute (WRI) in natural resources, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in food and humanitarian policies, and the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC) on plant genetic resources. An example of a global public policy network is the World Commission on Dams where FAO has voiced its concerns on the scant consideration given to food security. What characterizes such global public policy networks is their promotion of extended policy dialogue among stakeholders (governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, affected people's groups and private sector) *independently* from the convening institutions.

56. Another form of aggregation, initiated at the Commission on Sustainable Development to support the implementation of the *Agenda for the Twenty-first Century* (Agenda 21), is the Major Groups. They represent nine sectors of society¹⁵ which governments, civil society organizations and the UN System designated as critical for the development and implementation of policies for sustainable development and the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro, 1992). These categories include organizations which concurrently may have other affiliations in relation to FAO. For example, many organizations belonging to the IPC are also members of the Major Groups, but Major Groups also include categories historically excluded from the IPC.

57. The autonomous organization of NGO/CSOs in transnational social movements and networks presents institutional challenges related to the representativity, legitimacy and accountability of the interlocutors, as well as to their stability over time and the stability of their composition. On the other hand, the movements and networks also facilitate interaction, thereby reducing transaction costs. In this respect, the IPC has been valuable as an ally and critic in both Summits, has a programmatic approach, collaborates in projects and programmes and has a vast network.

58. Yet, none of these forms of aggregation is perceived as sufficiently representative of the diversity of expression found among NGO/CSOs. Not all NGO/CSOs agree with the IPC's underlying analyses of food and agricultural development, the emphases of IPC programme of work, or the technical quality of some of the NGO/CSO regional consultations it has organized. Questions have also been raised about how IPC leadership is determined and how decisions are taken and priorities set within the IPC. The IPC has become FAO's main interlocutor on the WFS follow-up as stated in the letter dated 16 January 2003 from the Director-General to the IPC International Focal Point. Concurrently, however, technical divisions continue to work with organizations and networks outside of the IPC as well as with the Major Groups.

59. As reported by the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UNGLS) and expressed in interviews, the aggregation of civil society into Major Groups has given rise to some controversy. A few civil society organizations expressed their disagreement with this classification and its 'imposition' on them by the UN; by others, it was considered non-inclusive and divisive; others saw it as part of their support to the UN and to multilateralism vis-à-vis the

¹⁵ Major Groups comprise women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGOs, local authorities, workers and trade unions, farmers, business and industry, and the scientific and technology community.

difficulties being encountered by the UN in dealing with a growing and diversified number of civil society organizations and their grouping into fluid networks without legal status. Other reported areas of contention relate to the inclusion of business, the discontent of indigenous peoples in being considered as non-state actors, and the inclusion of local authorities, considered by some as part of the public sector.

A.1 Partnership purposes and results

60. NGO/CSOs partner with FAO through their participation in international policy fora for the promotion, negotiation, monitoring and implementation of international regulatory and voluntary frameworks. NGO/CSOs are also partners at the country level in policy dialogue, in programmes and projects.

61. With regard to **international policy fora**, NGO/CSOs participated actively in the 1996 *World Food Summit* and the 2002 *World Food Summit: five years later*. The World Food Summit in 1996 was an opportunity for FAO to devise a strategy for collaboration with civil society organizations. More than 2000 organizations corresponded with the Secretariat throughout the preparatory process and some 500 attended the Summit itself. About 1,300 participants from 80 countries attended the parallel NGO Forum. In 2002, about 500 NGO/CSO delegates from over 250 accredited organizations participated in the WFS:fy1, while some 1,000 delegates were present at the parallel NGO/CSO Forum. In both Summits, NGO/CSOs developed their own positions which they could communicate to the Summits' plenary sessions; the participation of developing country NGO/CSOs was enabled through donor funding.

62. These international non-governmental organizations (INGO) having formal status with the Organization participate as observers in the FAO Conference, Council and technical meetings according to the policy outlined in the FAO Basic Texts. The INGOs and other NGO/CSOs hold a formal meeting during the Conference, the results of which are communicated in plenary session. NGO/CSOs, particularly those which have their headquarters in industrialized countries, also participate as observers in inter-governmental commissions, expert panels and working groups and the Committees on Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, World Food Security and Commodity Problems.

63. NGO/CSOs have played a critical role in the negotiation of **international regulatory and voluntary frameworks** initiated under the aegis of FAO. Pioneering experiences date back to the early 1980s, of interest for both the contributions made by NGO/CSOs and the modalities of interaction and communication devised in the Organization. Professionally competent NGOs provided information and data, and carried out advocacy work throughout the 17-year long process leading to the *Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides*, while FAO facilitated dialogue between governments, NGOs and industry. NGOs were also a strong force in the preparation process for the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources*, and contributed with their technical expertise and technical lobbying. Their engagement and commitment over many years helped build trust between NGO/CSOs, governments and FAO. In the case of the *Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries*, they drew attention to small-scale fisheries and people-centred, as opposed to technology-driven, approaches. Their role is also critical now in the implementation of the Code.

64. More recently, NGO/CSOs have been an important force in the process and provided critical substantive input to the preparation of the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security*, adopted by the FAO Council in November 2004. The Guidelines are the only Human Rights instrument that has not been designed by a human rights organization, and it is the first of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which member governments have decided to implement.

65. On the international regulatory and voluntary frameworks, NGO/CSOs from developed countries have predominated; however, in the process, they were able to pull in developing countries' NGO/CSOs.

66. NGO/CSO participation in international policy fora and regulatory frameworks has been governed by the FAO Basic Texts. This has been effective, allowing flexibility and innovation. Institutional practices such as the multistakeholder dialogues initiated in 2001, have enabled increased dialogue and interaction. In 2003, the Intergovernmental Working Group for the Voluntary Guidelines (IWG) on the Right to Food allowed NGOs to speak before the Government statements had ended. In the general discussions, there was no distinction between member states and observers. Similarly, following the recommendation of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources in 2002 to create “more opportunities to stimulate greater interaction between members and the organizations”, a special session for an open dialogue between NGO/CSOs and governments was held.

67. NGO/CSOs also partner with FAO **programmes**, contributing their technical expertise and advocacy capacity. For example, three NGOs have contributed to Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) with their expertise on livelihood frameworks and tools as well as development of food insecurity monitoring systems. NGO/CSOs have also produced technical studies of global interest and raised awareness leading to the formulation of the Africa Stockpiles Programme; over 100 African NGOs have declared their support to the Programme. The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative is led by NGO/CSOs organized into Major Groups. They have identified their respective areas of contribution, and provided some of their own resources, for the implementation of Chapter 14 of Agenda 21 on sustainable agriculture and rural development, for which FAO is the UN System Task Manager. Concerns were expressed by some Major Group focal points on the limited human and financial resources given by FAO to the SARD initiative and to enable the Organization to perform effectively as UN System Task Manager.

68. NGOs’ outreach capacity is very important to the Education for Rural People partnership and the Feeding Minds Fighting Hunger campaign. One hundred and fifty of the 190 members of Education for Rural People are NGO/CSOs from agriculture, rural development and education sectors. NGOs and professional associations, as founding partners of Feeding Minds Fighting Hunger, link hundreds of thousands of members.

69. At the regional and country level, NGO/CSOs also partner with FAO on **policy dialogue and programme/project implementation**. Building on the World Food Summit strategy of engagement towards non-governmental actors, NGO/CSOs from the different regions have been holding their own consultations prior to the FAO Regional Conferences. These have addressed the ministerial segment of the FAO Regional Conferences.

70. Relations with NGO/CSOs from developing countries in international and country-level activities have generally included contractual relations for the implementation of activities and, in some cases, fruitful partnerships with the Organization have developed. In addition, they have contributed to global partnerships such as the International Alliance Against Hunger (IAAH), the International Year of the Mountain, the United Nations System Network on Rural Development and Food Security, and Education for Rural People. Contributions relate to the organization of workshops, sharing/exchanging information and experiences, and advocacy (e.g. World Food Day).

71. Although not reviewed systematically, the interviews and the auto-evaluation of the Policy Assistance Division conducted in 2004 show the voluntary involvement of civil society in many projects dealing with **policies and institutional development** at various stages of the policy cycle. On these, the technical expertise of developing countries’ NGO/CSOs has been found weak.

72. NGO/CSO involvement in projects and in the development, analysis and assessment of policy has become more frequent. The Programme and Project Review Committee (PPRC) has developed the criterion “Participation, Partnership and Alliance”, and encourages the involvement of NGO/CSOs whenever possible.

73. A recent survey conducted by TCDS reports FAO Representatives' generally positive assessment of NGO/CSOs in relation to implementation of programmes and projects at the country level (see Box 5 for an example of this type of collaboration). However, they also point out difficulties encountered: assessing the nature and legal status of NGO/CSOs, many of them having sprung up more in response to donor funding opportunities and other factors than as the result of an endogenous civil society growth; receiving guidance in obtaining government clearance for NGO/CSO participation; and obtaining information about modalities that could favour mutual knowledge and respect.

74. NGO/CSOs value partnerships with FAO, which is perceived as a neutral broker providing a forum for gathering multiple constituencies, particularly on controversial issues. They also value the global studies produced by the Organization, which they can use, with adaptation, for advocacy work. The humanitarian NGOs find it useful to work with FAO for the longer-term perspective an organization like FAO can have. They appreciate the NGO/CSO Regional Consultations and the special events on thematic issues.

Box 5. Input Trade Fairs in Mozambique

FAO and the NGO ActionAid launched Input Trade Fairs (ITFs) in Mozambique in 2002 as a means of enhancing the use of local produce in emergency responses. A "revolving fund" was set up for seed repayment to reach a greater number of beneficiaries and enhance impact. In view of the success of the pilot projects, the Government decided to promote ITFs in drought-affected areas as an alternative for ensuring access and supply of seeds.

A Letter of Agreement formalized the partnership between FAO, the Government (recipient organization) and the NGO (implementing agency). During the biennium 2003-04, 49 ITFs had been put in place by government and NGOs alike. All partners participated in the targeting and categorization of beneficiaries and were involved in training and awareness-raising activities. FAO's facilitation was viewed as a positive force in creating a supportive work environment among donors, government and NGOs, and the strong link that developed between Government and civil society was considered key to the success of the partnership.

Today, ITFs offer wider input supply and better prices than the commercial market, and represent a step forward from emergency to development activities.

A.2 Conclusions

75. NGO/CSO participation in **international policy fora**, Summits and FAO's Committees and Commissions as observers has been constructive. NGO/CSOs have demonstrated professionalism and technical competence in the promotion, negotiation, drafting, monitoring and implementation of international regulatory and voluntary frameworks, in some cases complementing FAO's expertise, and in others filling gaps, such as for example human rights approaches to food security and food sovereignty. The rationale behind their partnerships is the desire to carry forward programmes, treaties and codes of conduct which correspond to the aims of their own organizations. Partnerships have been mostly informal, based on technical relations with FAO technical staff which are judged as 'excellent'. The introduction of innovative practices in partnerships governed by the rules of FAO's Basic Texts are judged positively both by FAO staff and the NGO/CSOs interviewed. Compared to other UN organizations, FAO has a positive record of NGO/CSO participation, and has found modalities to accommodate a wide-ranging representation. This was confirmed in the interviews with the NGO/CSOs and the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service.

76. The partnerships concerning **joint programmes, including normative work**, also demonstrate the value of NGO/CSOs for FAO's work. Furthermore, they confirm the broad outreach of NGO/CSOs and their capacity for advocacy, by "repackaging" FAO's normative

work for non specialised audiences and the general public. They are thus valuable allies in creating and maintaining consensual knowledge about causes and effects of hunger.

77. The **NGO/CSOs Regional Consultations** prior to the FAO Regional Conferences have generally been praised and highly considered, except in those cases where there has been excessive focus on political declarations and principles to the detriment of technical discussions. They are now a regular feature of Regional Conferences and instrumental in involving NGO/CSOs even further in the work of FAO's governing bodies, as occurred with the Committee on Food Security.

78. Significant levels of **country-level partnerships** with NGO/CSOs have been facilitated through contractual arrangements. There is a generally positive assessment of collaboration, both in implementation of projects and programmes and in advocacy work. In some cases, northern NGOs in the field positively appraised the FAO Representatives' catalytic role in "*enhancing the trust of governments in national NGOs*". At the same time, there is the recognition of difficulties encountered by FAO Representatives in expanding collaboration with NGO/CSOs. The extent and degree of NGO/CSOs engagement may also depend on the individual countries' political environment and institutions, which shape the possibility of interaction among different societal groups.

79. Experience shows that building partnerships and handling a multiplicity of partners requires a long gestation period and is very time-demanding for FAO technical officers, often beyond resources they have at hand. Mobilizing resources often becomes part of the programmes and partnership building of technical officers who make individual contacts for this (e.g. the SARD-Initiative, the Africa Stockpiles Programme and Education for Rural People).

80. Overall, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between NGO/CSOs and FAO. Nevertheless, there is space for improvement.

81. **Country level partnerships.** As the report of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations¹⁶ underlines, country level partnerships are critical, on the one hand for the formulation and implementation of national policies and programmes, and on the other for connecting "the global with the local", namely for the adaptation and implementation of international regulations and voluntary frameworks at the national level. For these partnerships, attention has to be paid to the weaker access of NGO/CSOs to financial and information resources as well as, in some cases, to their weaker capacity to contribute to technical work.

82. **FAO as an inclusive and outward-looking organization.** FAO, like other international agencies, has witnessed an increasing interest on the part of NGO/CSOs in its international policy fora and regulatory frameworks. Yet, it should be noted that the number of organizations participating in the World Food Summits has been much smaller than other global UN summits¹⁷. The evaluation team's contacts with UN-interested NGOs revealed poor knowledge of FAO and its work, particularly in the area of sustainable development, considered more as the domain of other agencies. For some NGOs, the privileged interlocutor position of IPC was interpreted as potentially exclusive of other networks and organizations. NGO/CSO collaboration with FAO is generally focused on the themes of food, agriculture and rural poverty. There is scope to ensure that the Organization remains open to all constituencies involved in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and the environment from production to processing, manufacturing and consumption.

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly, 2004. We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and global governance. Report of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. A/58/817.

¹⁷ In 2002, for example, 737 accredited organizations and 30,000 delegates participated in the parallel forum at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The same year, approximately 1,000 participants attended the parallel NGO/CSO forum at the World Food Summit: *five years later*.

83. **Knowledge management and organizational learning.** There could be more systematic knowledge and sharing of information within the Organization about the NGO/CSOs which work with FAO, as well as more dissemination of positive lessons in partnerships in all domains of FAO's work. As mentioned by one interviewee, the unit in charge of relations with NGO/CSOs in the Organization should be 'empowered' to provide policy and procedural guidance based on positive experiences, so as to allow organizational learning through institutionalization of positive practices.

84. **Recommendation 1: Increase FAO's inclusiveness**

- a) If the IPC is to remain the main interlocutor between NGO/CSOs and FAO on the World Food Summit follow up, it should embrace all constituencies involved in agriculture, including the whole range of actors from producers to consumers, excluding medium and large private sector firms for which different channels of interaction are suggested. This should be addressed at the time of the overall assessment of the IPC-FAO relations envisaged in 2006 as agreed between the IPC and the Organization.¹⁸
- b) Concurrently, the Organization should keep abreast of the complex and evolving institutional landscape of NGO/CSOs into networks and social movements and ensure that none of the range of actors mentioned are excluded from collaboration with FAO. The policy document prepared in 1999¹⁹ should be updated to reflect the openness and inclusiveness of FAO and prioritization of partnership areas.

85. **Recommendation 2: Improve knowledge management and facilitate organizational learning**

- a) A set of knowledge management tools could be developed, such as: a) a data base in the Field Programme Management System (FPMIS) with technical divisions and field offices entering information on NGO/CSOs and what they do within the framework of projects; b) reviewing the list of INGOs with formal status with FAO to verify their interest in maintaining relations with FAO; c) reviving the internal group of NGO/CSOs divisional focal points for sharing experiences and positive lessons; d) reviewing periodically the results of applying the PPRC criterion on building partnership and alliances; e) enhancing the recently revived webpage by exploring the possibility of a community of practice website, rather than the present one-way communication; f) linking to the webpage of the technical offices' special communications and materials for parliamentarians, indigenous peoples' organizations and youth organizations.
- b) The unit in charge of relations with NGO/CSOs, with the collaboration of the divisional focal points, could use the various knowledge management instruments set in place to assist in mapping existing and potential NGO/CSO contributions to FAO's normative and operational work, ensuring that the Organization is as inclusive as possible of different food and agriculture constituencies. Such mapping could serve the purpose of prioritizing strategic partnerships, helping to avoid organizational fragmentation, create opportunities for synergies and identify new partners.

B. FAO'S PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

86. The evaluation of the present state of partnerships between the private sector and FAO takes into consideration the background to such relations, dating back as early as 1965, when

¹⁸ Letter of the Director-General to the IPC International Focal Point dated 16 January 2003.

¹⁹ FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations, 1999

recourse to leading industries in Europe and North America was accepted by the FAO Conference as a way to mobilize "...the managerial ability, technical know-how, scientific experience, and capital resources..."²⁰. In 1966, the FAO *Industry Cooperative Programme* (ICP) was established, funded totally through private sector contributions. At its height, more than 100 companies were members, from the food, machinery, animal feed, fertilizer, pesticide, sugar, pulp and paper, and wood products industries. Missions were carried out in developing countries, where senior staff from ICP member companies together with FAO technical staff assisted member countries in policy making and in investment decisions for agri-food development. By 1975, the ICP had 18 Working Groups and Joint Task Forces with technical divisions on agricultural engineering, plant protection, land and water development, food loss prevention, nutrition, animal health and production, fisheries and forestry.

87. To participating companies, the ICP was a means for gaining knowledge on the developing world, seen as a potential long term market. The achievements of the programme were mainly in providing advice leading to the establishment of new agroindustries, such as tomato production and processing in Turkey, research and development in protein foods, and training and publications on industrial processes.

88. Over the years, the original concept of the private sector as a source of technical know-how, of scientific experience and of capital became overshadowed by the notion of the private sector as a source of funds for FAO's programmes. This ambiguity on the role of the private sector, the rise of environmental movements opposed to industrial agriculture and general distrust of multinationals led to the termination of the ICP in 1978.

89. For the following 16 years, FAO had no official policy for working cooperatively with the private sector. Nevertheless, individual divisions in FAO continued relations with a variety of private sector actors, for their attendance at official meetings, technical contributions to projects and other activities.

90. In 1994, in concert with the UN Secretary-General's openness toward the private sector, FAO initiated a new policy to expand and intensify its partnership with the private sector and in 1995, it established a new Unit for Cooperation with the Private Sector and NGOs (TCDN). In 1996, the private sector was clearly identified as a partner in the World Food Summit Plan of Action. Private investments were recognized as constituting nearly three-quarters of the future investment needed for on-farm improvements in the developing countries, the remaining one-quarter consisting of complementary public investments.

91. In the year 2000, FAO issued its policy guidelines on the private sector, with the view to attracting increased private sector participation in food security and other agricultural development programmes through partnership activities. The policy identified five priority areas: expanding dialogue with the private sector, mobilising resources, increasing private investments in agriculture, developing national private sector capabilities from producers to agribusiness enterprises and creating a facilitating framework for partnership initiatives within FAO²¹. The same policy document gives information on the use of the FAO emblem and logos, but is not articulated around the different private sector partners.

92. The United Nations Secretary-General had announced the Global Compact a year earlier, and launched it only seven months after the publication of FAO's "Principles and Guidelines for Cooperation with the Private Sector". The "Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Community" were introduced almost simultaneously. However, as assessed from interviews with staff of other UN organizations, FAO has coordinated very little its endeavours with those of the UN. The Organization's approach to business has not evolved with -

²⁰ Friedrich, Alexander G. Gale, Valence E., *Public-Private Partnership within the United Nations System Now and Then*, W. Bertelsmann Verlag, Bielefeld, 2004, p. 10

²¹ *Principles and Guidelines for FAO Cooperation with the Private Sector*, FAO/Rome, 2000 (p.3).

or benefited from - the UN's growing learning about the Private Sector. As a result, FAO seems to be somewhat out of step on some of aspects of the development of United Nations - Private Sector relations.

B.1 Partnership purposes and results

93. The information gathered for this evaluation has identified broad types of partnerships between FAO and the private sector. They relate to private sector participation in national and international policy dialogue fora, regulatory and voluntary frameworks initiated by FAO, exchange of data and information, provision of expert advice, and collaboration in programmes and projects. Lastly, the private sector provides financial resources to FAO's work²².

94. Experiences reviewed point to different channels and modalities of interaction leading to private sector **participation in international and national policy** fora and in the **regulatory and voluntary frameworks** initiated in FAO. Only some of these qualify as partnership, as defined by the evaluation. Business and industry INGOs with formal status are invited to FAO official meetings as observers, following the policy set forth in the Basic Texts. There was participation of the private sector in the World Food Summit and the *World Food Summit: five years later*. In the latter, a Private Sector Forum parallel event took place with 70 companies, mostly from Italy, but also with some multinational corporations. This Forum constituted an opportunity to identify a group of private sector companies which could become allied to FAO's mission. However, further contacts did not materialize in partnerships for development purposes, due to the failure in reaching a shared vision and purpose. The companies viewed collaboration as a route to business expansion, while FAO was seeking support for longer-term development activities.

95. The greatest participation by the private sector is in Codex standard setting, referenced in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). The links of Codex to WTO Agreements has strengthened industry groups' interest in standards which reflect their requirements. Currently, 156 International NGOs (approximately 70% of which are private sector interest groups) have observer status with Codex. In the development of standards, INGOs receive all working papers and meeting reports and have the opportunity to contribute to all stages of the process, including elaboration of Codex standards. The meetings of the Commission where decisions on adoption of standards are made bring together national delegations from all member countries with advisors, often from the NGOs, including industry. Even though the recently established Codex Trust Fund attempts to cover costs of one delegate per country, developing countries have smaller delegations and less input from industry and NGOs than developed countries. In order to deal with these issues, the possible introduction of an accreditation process is currently under review by the Codex Committee on General Principles. Both FAO and WHO have been reviewing the process for the provision of expert advice²³ to Codex and to member countries with the objective of making it more transparent, inclusive and harmonized between the two agencies.

96. Private sector companies and associations have been involved in voluntary frameworks, such as the International Plant Protection Convention, the Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries, and those on pesticides, while others are under discussion (such as the Code of Practice for Replanted Forests). They have participated in multistakeholder meetings, presented their practical viewpoints on how they could comply with the codes and suggested market-based instruments for widening their adoption. The private sector's role has proved crucial in advising on, and implementing, market mechanisms that reward responsible approaches to fisheries and forest resources, for example, through ecolabelling.

²² The latter being covered in the following analysis as explained in the section on Approach and Methodology.

²³ Joint FAO/WHO Workshop on the Provision of Scientific Advice to Codex and Member Countries, WHO/FAO Geneva 2004.

97. FAO also works with a range of industry associations on soil fertility, irradiation, and forestry, among many others. In the past, many meetings were held solely with private sector groups. The perception was that FAO could be influenced by them acting as lobby groups for their sector (fertilizer, pesticides, forestry). FAO has played a role in helping these meetings and working groups evolve towards a more inclusive nature, with representation of NGOs, consumer groups and, in some cases, government.

98. At the country level, national agriculture sector and agroindustry policy meetings and studies on specific sectors are carried out with local private sector participation (e.g. in the promotion of productive alliances in agri-food chains in Peru, Chile, Brazil and Mexico).

99. With respect to **exchange of data and information**, there are several cases where private sector industry provides technical and market data in relation to particular products and sub-sectors which are then used by FAO for its work and shared with member governments. For example, the Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products, a statutory body of FAO since 1963, brings together the Chief Executive Officers of major forest products associations around the world, including some representation from developing countries (members represent 95% of the global pulp and paper industry). The forestry industry benefits from access to discussion on global issues affecting it. FAO hosts the Secretariat of the Committee, which meets once a year to share data on production levels, forecasts, market data, etc., which governments do not have, and to review FAO's strategy and work programme in Forestry. FAO can add this to information from other sources for global reports.

100. In the area of fisheries, Fishery Industry Information Networks (INFOFISH) agreements have been established with 80 private companies who contribute every month with their price and market information to the compilation of the European fish price report, part of the Globefish information service. FAO receives the data, integrates it with other data and publishes reports through the INFOFISH networks. Member countries, especially their export industry, benefit from the production of timely global and regional information.

101. Other examples are the preparation of fertilizer demand forecasts by FAO with data shared by other technical agencies and fertilizer companies and the Access to Global Online Research on Agriculture (AGORA), through which 23 publishing houses (private companies and scientific associations) provide developing countries (typically with an annual GNI per capita of \$1,000 or less) free on-line access to journal articles.

102. Private Sector food processing, pesticides and chemicals industries contribute with **expert advice** on food safety in view of the expertise residing with companies. In other areas such as livestock standards, parasitic resistance to veterinary drugs and standards for pesticide sprayers, private sector experts have provided scientific advice as well as practical commercial perspectives. This type of collaboration with the private sector has not been without controversy. In the area of nutrition requirements some undue influence was reportedly exercised by industry in the selection of experts, running of meetings, and final conclusions of a 1997 report. The incident was highlighted by the BBC in 2004, which stated in a TV programme that FAO was influenced by the sugar and food industries protecting their own interests, causing damage to the credibility and reputation of the Organization.

103. The cases reported on the undue influence or conflict of interest by industry pose the question of both expert selection procedures, transparency in what constitutes scientific advice, and communication and interpretation of risks to all audiences, including the general public. Hence, as observed in a recent auto evaluation "... *deliberations of experts must not only be beyond reproach but also seen to be so. While private sector involvement can be visualized in areas where scientific advice depends on information that may be forthcoming from the industrial sector, their involvement in deliberations on recommendations of nutrient requirements for health*

and nutrition of populations is questionable"²⁴. Another key point is the growing concern regarding the influence of industry and the private sector on the development of food and nutrition policy, which threatens the primacy of good nutrition and health of populations. Similar risks concern other areas such as pesticides, fertilizers, veterinary drugs, etc.

104. The private sector **contribution to FAO programmes and projects** relates to FAO's work on agri-food chains, on promotion of small and medium-scale agri-food enterprises, and on capacity-building. In the case of agri-food chains, private sector companies and their businesses serve as the demand pull to motivate producers to engage with them. The chains may be short, such as supplying local supermarkets, or longer, such as supplying wholesalers who link through the chain to other actors who ultimately export finished products to external markets.

105. FAO facilitates the link between poor farmers and rural people with the agri-food chains which are developing or could be developed, generally as suppliers of raw materials or employees. Examples are the partnership with a multinational company in the work on biodiversity in the Treaty for Cooperation in the Amazon in Peru and the alliances supported by FAO in Latin America between two large national agri-food companies and farmers' organizations in Chile, Peru, Brazil and Mexico. In the first case, 2000 producers were linked through a local company to the multinational company as a buyer of a particular product; in the second, the aim was to establish viable agri-food chains for specific products. FAO's work on agri-food chains includes interacting with the private sector when studying the conditions of small and medium enterprises (SME) agri-food enterprises, in order to identify constraints to growth and competitiveness and to follow up with technology, quality and business management training and services, as well as policy advice. Generally, FAO works through a third party which is responsible for identifying private sector companies to collaborate in each project. In this case, national consultants, NGOs or industry associations act as the conduit to agroenterprises who provide access to their business as well as information for studies to identify industry's needs, develop appropriate training materials and management tools as well as technology transfer, demonstration and processing centres. These are generally small scale agroenterprises and microenterprises where the aim is to upgrade product quality, and to improve technology and management.

106. In a number of cases, FAO has partnered with private companies and industry-supported foundations which have contributed co-funding and expertise. Examples are technical inputs to manuals and training materials (e.g. the Manual on Good Practices for the Meat Industry and the training manual on Gum Arabic) valued positively by both the companies and FAO. The companies benefited through being able to use the publication and disseminate it to their staff and clients around the world. Additionally, their image was improved by being associated with FAO, since both publications were approved to have the FAO logo on the cover with that of the co-sponsoring partner.

107. Overall, the private sector contribution to FAO programmes and projects has been valued by FAO for the skills, experience and perspectives on building businesses, their openness to engage with FAO to explore the agri-food chain. The major issues relate on one hand to the difficulties encountered by FAO in following up with governments on policy and programme recommendations, since the agribusiness sector is not a priority for traditional agriculture ministries. On the other hand, very little evidence could be gathered by the evaluation about national level private sector partners. Yet, national small and medium enterprises are significant sources of employment and food supply in developing countries. They represent an important resource as a foundation for future growth of the agri-food business and service sector, and as such, warrant as much attention as the primary production sector for economic development. With FAO's experience both on the operational and technology issues (Agricultural and Food Engineering Technologies Service) and the management, marketing, credit areas (Agricultural

²⁴ FAO/ESNA. *Auto-evaluation of PE 221A1 Human Nutrition Requirements*, December 2004.

Management, Marketing and Finance Service), FAO could assist the development of national agri-food chains for food security and poverty reduction.

108. FAO has received **donations or sponsorships** from the private sector for some of its activities. Over the three biennia 1998-2003, approximately 13% of the extra-budgetary non-governmental funding raised by the Organization in the form of Trust Funds came from the private sector and, among these, 17% from specific companies²⁵.

109. To support the production of a few FAO publications (the Manual on Good Practices for the Meat Industry or the training manual on Gum Arabic), funds have been mobilized from a number of private sector groups. There are also a few cases where multinational companies have made donations to FAO for specific technical activities, such as support to School Milk Conferences and Ecofish internet service on safety and quality of fishery products. Support is under consideration for running costs and training at FAO Reference Laboratories by a group of companies.

110. The cases reviewed by the evaluation show that while it is possible to develop a "sponsorship" partnership, in each case the funding level has been quite modest. In all of the cases, the companies involved are benefiting from communicating that they are partnerships with FAO in their respective initiatives (image-building) and the possible use of FAO logo is an important consideration in entering the partnership. From the FAO side, there is a significant image risk in partnerships with private companies which must be addressed carefully by the Organization. These aspects are dealt with in a subsequent section on institutional arrangements to deal with partnerships.

111. Overall, the financial contribution of the Private Sector to the total extra-budgetary funding of the Organization appears to be very slight²⁶. There are several reasons for that. The limited scope for mobilizing resources from the private sector, in particular from private companies, was confirmed by all UN counterparts visited, even by those for which private sector funding was an important element of their total budget and those well equipped in terms of resources and expertise to carry out fund-raising activities. Sponsorship budgets of private companies are quite small in general vis-à-vis the demand. Private foundations with more philanthropic objectives may offer greater possibility, though again, competition for resources is very high. Other reasons may lie in the relatively poor capacity of the Organization to develop such initiatives.

B.2 Conclusions

112. The assessment and recommendations that follow take into account the rapidly evolving changes in the agri-food system and the overall context of UN relations with the private sector. The main axes of these changes are expressed in current trends in corporate social responsibility practices and the growing maturity of UN - Private Sector relations, especially within the context of the United Nations Global Compact.

113. The number of partnerships, as understood for the purpose of this evaluation, with the private sector is low, mostly found in expert consultation and data exchange activities and, to a lesser extent, policy dialogue and regulatory framework processes. Among the experiences reviewed involving large national companies and farmers organizations in developing agri-food chain projects, only one case was found of a partnership between a multinational company and FAO in building a new product chain with direct benefits for the rural poor. The mobilization of resources for FAO's work has also been very limited.

²⁵ Study conducted in collaboration with FAO's Central Accounting Service (AFFC)

²⁶ In the course of the past three biennia, the private sector contributed about US\$ 7,6 million to Trust Funds. While this represents 13% of total non-governmental funding, it accounts for 0.22% of total Trust Fund contributions.

114. The evidence gathered relates mostly to discrete events (expert meetings, workshops, publications), and collaboration has relied on individual initiatives of some staff. There are few cases of sustained, mutually beneficial partnerships or more substantive engagement to solve a problem or contribute to longer term goals. It can be concluded that the policy formulated in the year 2000 has been insufficiently communicated across the Organization, and there has not been a substantive corporate effort to implement it.

115. This may be due to the lack of clarity in the strategy itself as to the type of private sector actors the Organization should partner with and the purposes of partnership. The limited potential to mobilize funds from the private sector has often continued to play an important part in the Organization's thinking on the potential for partnerships. The above analysis shows that the "private sector" encompasses different groups (e.g. agri-food multi-national companies, private philanthropic foundations, and small and medium enterprises in developing countries), with different realities, and different expectations as to partnerships with FAO.

116. There is also a certain amount of resistance among staff with regard to partnerships with the private sector. This is certainly partly due to individual convictions, but also to negative experiences in some areas of work, where pressure groups from the private sector have made collaboration difficult and risky (e.g. chemical/pesticides industries, food industry and nutrition). The Organization needs to address issues of transparency in a systematic and open manner.

117. Interviews with staff indicated that the role of the private sector focal point, overwhelmed by the operational aspects of private sector partnerships, was insufficiently recognized, further hampering efforts to implement the strategy (see section on management below).

118. Furthermore, knowledge and experience in working with the private sector are dispersed throughout the Organization. There is no mechanism for FAO officers working with the private sector to share their information and experiences, nor has there been learning from the experience of the Industry Cooperative Programme. Yet, at the time, this programme was a pioneer in showing how industry and the UN could work together to advise governments and developing country companies on development of agro-industries. It provided some of the first experiences of agri-food chain development and public-private partnerships, which today are again of priority interest in development, as highlighted by FAO's normative work.

119. Similarly, there has been too limited learning from the experience of other UN organizations, or the process the UN System has gone through in the past years. In particular, the wealth of knowledge and information available through the Global Compact has barely been tapped.

120. Finally, according to the interviews with representatives of various parts of the Private Sector and the Private Sector Panel held with individuals from multinational companies, FAO is not regarded as an essential partner. It is sometimes perceived as a fragmented organization, not communicative and perhaps adverse to collaboration with the private sector. They do not know what FAO has to offer in terms of potential collaborative endeavours, but would expect FAO to work with governments to improve the enabling environment for agri-food business to prosper (regulatory frameworks, policies, reducing the political risk), to assist in organizing farmers to supply companies, and to facilitate contacts with governments.

121. The evaluation's findings confirm that most of FAO's work has involved multinational corporations, while much more limited evidence was found of collaboration with national private companies and associations of developing countries. A major factor for multinational companies partnerships with FAO is their interest in food safety and quality which drives their strategy and actions on sustainable agriculture. However, the cases of alleged undue influence in the regulatory work of FAO highlight the importance of assessing the ethics of private sector participation in, or sponsorship of expert meetings, as these impact not only on the credibility of the results, but on the scientific and ethical credibility of the Organization. They also demonstrate that clear and accurate identification and clarification of the role of the private sector partners are vital to

maintaining the integrity of the work, and that the need for additional extra-budgetary funding should be carefully weighed against the risks of excessive influence on outcomes and deliberations and of damaging the image of FAO.

122. The scant evidence on collaboration with the private sector from developing countries confirms the evaluation finding that a holistic view of agri-food chains and systems is not mainstreamed; attention focuses on primary production. Indeed, the complexity of dealing with the other essential actors in agri-food chains, which are all from the private sector nowadays (small and medium enterprises, service suppliers, input suppliers, processors, wholesalers, exporters, large national companies, multinational corporations, importers, supermarkets, etc.) has not been adequately addressed. Yet, FAO, through its normative work, has analysed the major changes occurring in development of agri-food sectors internationally and nationally, driven by globalization and liberalization of economies. Strengthening and refining this line of work might provide the basis for an analytical framework for fostering new approaches, revising the strategy for partnerships with the private sector and assessing replicability in other country-contexts.

123. **Recommendation 3:** *Refine the strategy for partnerships with the private sector*

The strategy and policy for partnerships with the private sector should be revised in light of the above findings and conclusions, and taking into account a series of fundamentals:

- a) Differentiation between the types of partners with which FAO should partner, and what FAO should look for in each category of private sector partner. In particular, a distinction must be made between the multi-national companies, SMEs in developing countries, and philanthropic foundations which, in the latter case, should be targeted more for their sponsorship capacity. In addition, as explored further in section E.2. Addressing Reputation Risk, a first screening process could be operated through companies' adherence to the Global Compact, followed by review by an external agency.
- b) Recognition of the limited scope for partnerships on an equal footing with multinational companies, while acknowledging that multinational companies are major actors along the food chain and cannot be ignored.
- c) Need to explore the opportunities presented by the developments in Corporate Social Responsibility programmes within multinational companies and private sector Codes of Conduct, in particular within the framework offered by the Global Compact. As an example, interaction and common ground with adhering companies could be a possibility in the pursuit of the principles addressing environmental issues, or for the protection of community livelihoods (Principle 1). The Codes of Conduct developed under the aegis of FAO present another opportunity.
- d) Greater pro-activeness from FAO Representatives is required to identify small and medium enterprises in developing countries with which the Organization could partner, recognizing that collaborating with them will probably require significant capacity-building effort.
- e) Requirements of FAO's field programme and the broad areas identified through FAO's normative work on developments in the agri-food sector should be built upon. Other agencies' (UNIDO, ITC) experience in agri-food chains approaches and support to small and medium enterprises should also be acknowledged and a more pro-active stance should be taken to link with these agencies.
- f) Need for basic decisions on the amount of risk FAO is prepared to take in its relationships with the private sector and the implications, allowing the Organization to foster a culture capable of dealing with the private sector in the programmatic areas identified, and guiding staff on procedures and execution of expert and multi-stakeholder consultation processes.
- g) Differentiating resource mobilization for FAO's work from other purposes in partnerships, and associating it with other resource mobilization efforts. Resources

and skills needed for doing this work should be adequately assessed, and decisions taken on how much effort is justified in terms of funds mobilized.

124. **Recommendation 4:** *Increase mutual knowledge*

- a) The pilot nature of private sector partnerships in programmes and projects so far suggests carrying out assessments of these experiences with a view to better understanding partners, gains and constraints. In general, the stock-taking exercise started with this evaluation should be pursued and consolidated, and knowledge from these experiences disseminated throughout the Organization. Particular cases of success and failure should be made widely known to staff.
- b) A business-friendly communication strategy should be devised. It could comprise an annual information meeting, similar to the model set up by UNEP; enhancing the new dedicated webpage on the FAO site; improved communication about FAO on the UN website for businesses; increased linkages with the Global Compact, in order to both tap the accumulated knowledge on the Private Sector, and to present FAO work that is relevant and of interest to the broader business community (e.g., the Codes of Conduct formulated in FAO); and a presentation by FAO staff of the Organization's work at international private sector conferences or other fora.
- c) Staff information, training and capacity development should accompany this process to reduce the distance between FAO and the private sector. The Organization could draw from what is being done in other agencies (e.g. The World Bank) and establish a mechanism for sharing information in-house on private sector experiences (e.g. seminars by FAO and private sector visitors).

C. PARTNERSHIPS WITH RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

125. Academic and research institutions constitute the most numerous partners of FAO. This section refers to all those institutions devoted to both socio-economic and bio-physical sciences research; it excludes those representing social movements and think tanks, dealt with in the NGO/CSO section, as well as institutes and foundations supported by industry and business, discussed in the private sector section of this report.

C.1 Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

126. The fifteen International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) are by far the most frequent research partners of FAO. As noted by the 2001 survey of the IARCs conducted by FAO²⁷, linkages with FAO are multiple and at different levels. They include governance, strategic planning and programmatic levels, for both normative and technical activities and information exchange.

127. At the governance level, FAO is a co-sponsor of the CGIAR together with the World Bank and UNDP. FAO is a permanent member of the Executive Council (ExCo) and it hosts a CGIAR governance mechanism, the Secretariat of the Science Council (SC). The Science Council was established in 2004 as a successor to the Technical Advisory Committee Board. FAO participates through the office of the Assistant Director-General of the Sustainable Development Department. The Secretariat assists the Science Council “...in developing CGIAR research priorities and strategies, mobilizing scientific expertise, and monitoring, evaluating, and assessing the impact of CGIAR research²⁸”. FAO is a non-voting member of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute and has *ad personam* membership of the Board of the WorldFish Centre and the International Livestock Research Institute; occasionally, upon invitation, FAO Representatives attend meetings of the Board of other Centres as observers.

²⁷ FAO-SD, 2001.

²⁸ Director-General's Bulletin No. 2004/19, 17 August 2004.

128. FAO has been supporting the CGIAR financially with steady contributions despite decreases in its own budget allocations in the rest of the Organization. FAO also provides the legal framework for the *ex situ* collections held by the IARCs.

129. In addition, FAO participates at senior level in the Science Council. While FAO's participation in governance of the CGIAR (and vice-versa) is an important way of influencing research priorities, no other corporate mechanism is presently in place to convey systematically to the CGIAR the research needs as they emanate from FAO's normative and field programmes. Past meetings held with all the IARC Directors produced mixed results.

130. Conversely, the CGIAR and its Centres take part in FAO inter-governmental meetings and committees, in recognition of the inter-governmental authority of FAO and its bodies in setting and facilitating policy development. Examples of long-standing participation are involvement of IRRI, WARDA and CIAT in the International Rice Commission hosted by AGPC and IPGRI in the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources.

131. At the programmatic level, the IARCs participate both in the normative and operational work of FAO at headquarters and field level through analytical work, data/information exchanges and technical support. Collaboration takes place with the individual centres and also with the regional research associations through discrete activities and projects. While both the CGIAR and FAO perceive that there are a lot of collaborative efforts, particularly at the country level, they concur that institutional mechanisms could be strengthened to capture on a corporate basis the experiences and learning from them so as to allow iteration and feedback on research priority setting.

132. Collaboration with FAO on discrete activities and programmes takes place through the modalities of Memoranda of Understanding, Letters of Agreement, formal and informal contacts with all fifteen centres, either individually or through multiple centre partnerships. In addition to the overarching common goals indicated in the memorandum of understanding, some centres are adopting a more programmatic and strategic approach to collaboration with FAO, such as IPGRI or the International Food Policy Research Institute, defining areas of collaboration in detail and also the countries where joint work can be conducted.

133. The Centres engage with FAO on different terms. The evaluation team found that in some cases, collaboration took place through a memorandum of understanding without any reimbursement of costs or staff time (e.g. WARDA, IRRI and CIAT). In other cases (e.g. IFPRI), collaboration occurred with secondment of staff (from IFPRI to FAO) and cost-sharing arrangements. Cases were cited of high salary cost reimbursements which hindered further collaboration (e.g. IFPRI).

134. Overall, there is a positive assessment of collaboration between FAO and the IARCs. Relations at the governance level are reported as 'excellent' from both sides, as also evidenced by full alignment and political commitment in putting agriculture back on the development agenda, by FAO's financial contribution remaining unaltered in real terms in the last six years despite cuts in the Organization's budget and the upgrading of the Secretary of the Science Council to Divisional Director level, thus raising its institutional profile.

135. Some cases were reported by FAO of Centres not giving due acknowledgement to FAO's information and data sources or not willing to share survey data. While all the staff members interviewed agreed in principle on complementary roles of the CGIAR and FAO, the majority also mentioned the risk of the IARCs drifting towards seeking funds for developmental activities, driven by budget decreases. According to some interviews, CGIAR and FAO staff are not clearly aware of the respective roles of the organizations, in particular regarding the distinction between research as knowledge generation for agricultural development, and support to developing countries for building the policy, institutional and legal frameworks needed to effectively assimilate existing knowledge for implementing agricultural development strategies. A specific role for FAO could be in helping to disseminate the CGIAR centres' findings.

136. From the CGIAR side, comments were received on FAO staff knowing more about the CGIAR than vice-versa and also, that there is potential for more collaboration than exists at present. Examples given were research on impact of industrialized countries' subsidies on developing countries and more recourse to CGIAR research expertise for the regulatory frameworks negotiated in FAO and for Investment Centre missions.

137. The Science Council Secretariat is located in the Sustainable Development Department, parallel to CGIAR Secretariat's placement in the World Bank's Sustainable Development Department. This arrangement, however, raises two issues. First, whether the modalities in place allow all other departments to be fully represented and to interact fully with CGIAR at strategic level. The range of collaborative areas clearly demonstrates that the CGIAR is an organization-wide partnership, despite being placed within the Programme Research, Natural Resources Management and Technology Transfer Service. Second, regarding the role and functioning of the Research and Technology Development Service, whether a mechanism should be established to have a systematic picture of the collaboration between the IARCs and FAO. Such a mechanism would allow FAO to take stock of its own experience with the IARCs, and to convey the development bottlenecks and priorities where research would be required in a programmatic way. The absence of such information appears particularly critical for the country level, as confirmed by both FAO and CGIAR staff.

C.2 Other Academic/Research Institutions

138. FAO has a variety of relationships with other academic and research institutions, laboratories and other scientific bodies for different purposes, and academics may be part of the national delegations in FAO official meetings and committees. In 2003, the Technical Cooperation Department gathered divisions from all FAO departments in order to take stock of the situation on a corporate basis. It was found that divisions followed different modalities in collaborating with research institutions and that the Organization continues to receive requests for designation of collaborative status with FAO. In the absence of guidelines or criteria, there are *ad hoc* arrangements, with the risk of duplication in some cases (several units concluding agreements with the same institution), and in others, the risk of a negative image for the Organization (institutions calling themselves FAO Reference Centres without FAO authorization). The need was expressed to establish a corporate policy while maintaining flexibility and avoiding excessive formalization.

139. In particular, the Nutrition Division has been reviewing its relations with 32 institutes and universities, members of what was once known as the FAO Network of Excellence on Food Quality, Safety and Nutrition, later renamed as "Collaborating Centres on Food and Nutrition". The Animal Production and Health Division keeps a roster of approximately 90 reference laboratories and collaborating centres with which it collaborates for research on animal health and production. All such reference laboratories and collaborating centres are considered by the Divisions as very useful partners in developing new technologies and methodologies, helping maintain standards, helping FAO to synthesize and disseminate information, and to support its projects and programmes, including training. However, there are cases where support to intra- and inter-regional cooperation in research and technology transfer have drastically diminished due to the budget reductions of the last biennia (e.g. the Research, Extension and Training Division eliminated support to the European System of Cooperative Research in Agriculture which linked more than 3000 European scientists in North-South cooperation for agricultural research and technology development).

140. In the areas of plant breeding and animal production, the Joint FAO/IAEA Division has formalized its collaboration with two centres through the modality of IAEA Centres of Collaboration (IAEA-CC), which is modelled on the WHO collaborating centres network. It includes a definition of what constitutes an IAEA collaborating centre, conditions for designation, functions, criteria for selection, designation procedures, monitoring and evaluation, and re-designation and revocation of designation. Also in this case, the centres provide services (e.g. the

molecular characterisation of crops, including in the animal field) at no cost. In turn, they benefit from having the name of their institution associated with a UN agency.

141. In other areas of policy and socio-economic research, divisions deal with academic and research institutions, mostly from industrialized countries. This is particularly the case for the Organization's flagship publications (such as *The State of Food and Agriculture*, *The State of Food Insecurity* and *The State of the World's Fisheries and Aquaculture*). However, these collaborations are increasingly taking place through contracts, questioning the partnership nature of the collaboration. In addition, the high rates of these institutions have posed problems in several cases.

142. With respect to developing countries' research and academic institutions, the inception of what could become a region-wide partnership is the network of 24 universities being established through the Project FODEPAL in Latin America in support of capacity-building and applied policy research in the areas of food security, natural resource management, rural development, poverty alleviation and agricultural trade. A recent and more loose network, also with partnership potential, encouraging communications between policy makers and academics is the Near East and North Africa Regional Network for Agricultural Policies (NENARNAP).

143. The Organization has thus multiple relations with research institutions through discrete activities and projects, which are conceived on a very practical level. As confirmed in several interviews, knowledge about these relations is scattered and, as a result, it is difficult to assess their effectiveness in relation with FAO strategic priorities. There is no Organization-wide mechanism to allow compilation and sharing across regions of the successful experience in adoption of technologies emanating from the extensive field experience of FAO. Additionally, there is no working mechanism to convey systematically to research institutions the research needs that emanate from FAO's field programme at the national and regional level and to integrate the analysis of such needs in FAO's programme and policy work.

144. Most collaboration with research institutions takes place through contracts, without enough thought and attention to searching and devising more cost-effective 'partnership' modalities with institutions having complementary knowledge and interested in FAO's work.

145. **Recommendation 5:** *Develop a corporate approach to research partners*

- a) With a view to enabling full interaction and mutual knowledge between the CGIAR and FAO departments at various levels, consideration could be given to the establishment of a Task Force of key directors and chiefs engaged in close collaboration with the CGIAR to guide FAO-CGIAR relations and multi-departmental participation (including technical staff as appropriate) in the annual CGIAR meeting. From the CGIAR side, a focal points system (mirroring that of FAO) would also facilitate interaction and mutual knowledge at working level.
- b) The work currently under way to elaborate a corporate policy for the designation of FAO reference or collaborating centres should continue, either under the Technical Cooperation Department or under the joint chairmanship of the Agriculture and Economic and Social Departments, whose activities are closely and technically relevant. The WHO model of collaborating centres could be investigated further for its possible adaptation to FAO (see Box 6 for further details). Such a model is inspired by WHO's policy of assisting, coordinating and making use of the activities of existing institutions to contribute to advances in health research. Partnerships with the collaborating centres are considered by WHO as a cost-effective way of extending the organization's normative and technical cooperation work. However, in examining such an option, attention should be given to the resource requirements of such a system.

146. **Recommendation 6:** *Increase mutual knowledge*

- a) There is scope for institutionalizing a substantive joint FAO/CGIAR stock-taking exercise of FAO-CGIAR collaboration on a recurrent basis, for example every four to five years through the suggested Task Force. Such periodic review would allow learning, from an analysis of implementation, about the respective roles in research and in support to countries' institutional environment for the adoption and adaptation of the research results. It could be organized along regional and/or thematic lines and help set and review priorities with respect to the public goods addressed collectively by the CGIAR and FAO. This would streamline respective roles in the research and development continuum, from basic research to technology transfer through national institutions. It could also help highlight areas where further synergies could be realised (e.g. strengthening policy analysis capacity and facilitating institutional innovations to support sustainable reduction of poverty and hunger in developing countries).
- b) Similarly, periodic reviews could be conducted on partnerships with research institutions on thematic areas of FAO work and/or with a regional focus. Through such reviews, it could also be possible to capture the multitude of research activities and networks initiated by other UN organizations and of interest to the work of FAO, e.g. the UNESCO biotechnology network, the UNCTAD Gateway to Science and Technology for Development, just to name a few. To be a partner in such information and knowledge networks is essential, given that agricultural growth is increasingly "knowledge-driven" and "knowledge-intensive".

Box 6. The Model of the WHO Collaborating Centres

Designation: National institutions become designated WHO collaborating centres and thereby become part of an international collaborative network carrying out activities in support of WHO's mandate for international health work, contribute to its programme priorities and to the countries' institutional capacity. The designation is for a period of up to four years.

Criteria are defined for the Centres' selection: they should be able to fulfil one or several essential functions in support of WHO's programme priorities; their potential to play a strategic role in strengthening WHO's network in terms of geographical coverage and area of expertise; the scientific and technical standing of the institution and its level of commitment at national, regional and international levels; its ability to strengthen national and regional capacity; previous collaboration with WHO of at least two years.

Functions are defined, and include collection and dissemination of information, standardization of terminology and nomenclature, technology, diagnostic, therapeutic and prophylactic substances, and methods and procedures; development, and application and evaluation of appropriate technology.

Procedures: initiation of designation process and collaboration with the centres is managed by the relevant technical unit in WHO. The scope and objectives of the collaboration, including the terms of reference and its workplan for the four-year period, are jointly defined by WHO and the centre. Monitoring is done annually with a final assessment at the end of the four-year period.

Knowledge management: WHO has a data base on collaborating centres. This is used as a monitoring tool but also to exchange information on partners within the Organization and to serve as a reference for external institutions looking for partners in specific areas.

D. FAO'S PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE UN SYSTEM, THE WORLD BANK, AND OTHER INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

D.1 FAO and the UN System

147. There are fundamental driving forces in the way FAO relates to UN organizations. They include:

- The fact that FAO is part of the UN family, and as such should participate and collaborate in UN-wide inter-agency mechanisms (the “UN imperative”). It is therefore difficult to dissociate FAO’s partnerships within the UN system from the Organization’s mandatory relationships.
- The reform launched in 1997 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which emphasized a more coherent UN development system, and called for increased coordination and collaboration among the UN Funds and Programmes. Such reform now influences all parts of the UN development system. A series of mechanisms were created to affect this reform agenda. UN system policy coordination at the highest level is undertaken through the UN system Chief Executives Board (CEB), the successor arrangement to the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). It deals with a wide range of UN system policy issues, including enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the UN Development system. The UN Development Group (UNDG) is a global mechanism that provides policy guidance on operational and programmatic policy issues, through Guidance Notes to the UN Country Teams (UNCT). The CEB, UNDG and their subsidiary bodies work increasingly more closely. At country level, UN system country assessments are intended to be harmonized through Common Country Assessments (CCA), and UN system assistance through the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF).
- The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are progressively changing the way the UN works together and will do so even more in the near future. The recent paper prepared by the High Level Committee on Programmes emphasizes how the Millennium Declaration, by bringing a common vision of the new architecture of international cooperation, is shaping relationships among the UN organizations. “The system’s organizations are keenly aware that their working together is key to the force and quality of their contribution to progress, and that translating the renewed unity of purpose that had resulted from the Millennium Declaration into greater actual impact for their programmes is crucial to strengthening the case for multilateral cooperation.”

a) FAO’s Inter-Agency Coordination

148. Despite not being covered by the Evaluation, FAO’s role within the various inter-agency mechanisms was a recurrent theme during the interviews conducted with various individuals in different parts of the UN system. Overall, those interviewed gave the Evaluation Team a positive appreciation of FAO. FAO generally shows itself as an integral part of the UN system in inter-agency fora, and is present, makes its points and is very active in coordination mechanisms. In inter-governmental fora (e.g. ECOSOC, UNFF), the Organization appears as a willing partner, involved in session preparation and side events. The international context, including the resurgence of issues relating to the productive sector and rural development on the international agenda, may have contributed to FAO playing a fuller role.

b) Global level Partnerships

149. FAO is involved in many global UN collaborative initiatives. The Organization is obviously involved in those that are most relevant to its mandate: food security information (e.g. FIVIMS), environment (e.g. GPA²⁹, GTOS³⁰), water (e.g. GEMS), forests (e.g. Collaborative

²⁹ Global Programme Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities.

Partnerships on Forests, International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions), nutrition (e.g. UN Standing Committee on Nutrition), eco-systems (e.g. Eco-systems Conservation Group), disaster reduction (e.g. ISDR), sustainable agriculture and rural development (e.g. SARD Initiative), human rights and post-conflict peace building. The Organization has a key role (secretariat, chairmanship, etc.) in those areas where its technical leadership is recognized (e.g. forestry, fisheries). Many of these partnerships are not bilateral, but involve several UN organizations and other international agencies (see Box 7 on the Collaborative Partnership on Forests).

150. Most of FAO's partnerships with UN organizations encompass a wide spectrum of collaboration, ranging from networking and advocacy to joint programmes. The multiplicity of areas of collaboration appears to be in itself a dynamic factor of the overall relationships between the organizations (collaboration generates new partnerships). On a bilateral basis, FAO has long-standing and substantive partnerships with some UN organizations.

151. The World Health Organization is one of FAO's most important UN partners, collaborating with many of the Organization's programmes, including, fisheries, forestry, animal health, and nutrition and food safety. The joint FAO/WHO programme on food standards and the *Codex Alimentarius* were evaluated in 2002³¹. The evaluation results were positive overall regarding the usefulness and relevance of *Codex* standards to the needs of members. They were considered a vital component in promoting food control systems designed to protect consumer health, including issues related to international trade and the WTO agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). The joint efforts of the two agencies led to an *integrated approach to food safety* (from "farm-to-table") that the agencies could not have developed independently, and brought *considerable brokerage power*. More recently, cooperation has combined the expertise of the two organizations in animal husbandry and health. It is notable that the intensity of the collaboration at global level between the two agencies is not reflected to the same extent at country level. This was also observed by the joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of Codex which "*found inadequate interaction between FAO and WHO at the country level in developing food safety systems and food standards*". This is currently being addressed by the two agencies.

152. The bulk of the cooperation between FAO and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concerns Major Programmes 2.1 (Agricultural Production and Support Systems) and 2.2 (Food and Agriculture Policy and Development), and is conducted through the Joint FAO/IAEA Division on Agricultural Applications of Isotopes and Biotechnology. An assessment of the crop work of the division carried out in 2003³² showed that it assisted developing countries to develop new crop varieties through induced mutation techniques, and in providing training and services to its collaborators in the member countries. Good cooperation was evident in the use of Sterile Insect Technique to contain screw worm and Mediterranean fruit fly outbreaks. IAEA provides the scientific and research environment, while FAO enables the application of nuclear technology in agriculture and facilitates outreach to developing countries. The evaluation noted that whereas coordination at strategic level was quite good, it was less satisfactory at field level. This was partly due to FAO staff's insufficient awareness of the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme's decentralized structure.

153. Other examples of extensive collaborations are those with UNEP, one of FAO's most active partners. The range of collaboration increased in the past decade, notably after the Earth Summit, where the need for better integration of environmental and socio-economic development

³⁰ Global Terrestrial Observing System.

³¹ FAO (2003) Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and Other FAO and WHO Food Standards Work (PC 89/5).

³² FAO (2003) Evaluation of FAO Activities in Crop Production, Ninetieth Session of the Programme Committee, Rome, 15-19 September 2003 (PC90/3a).

issues gained predominance on the international agenda. Major partnerships include those under the frameworks of Climate Change and Forests (the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Mountain Partnership, the Global Land Network, the Global Terrestrial Ecosystem Observation, and the Land Degradation Assessment in the Drylands (LADA) project). Collaboration among the two organizations is generally smooth, despite occasional tensions stemming from diverging technical approaches (e.g. on the concept of desertification) or competition around scarce resources (e.g. LADA project). Overall, however, FAO is perceived by UNEP as bringing a wider constituency and higher leverage with national governments and donors.

154. Part of the collaboration between UNEP and FAO is carried out with GEF funding (UNEP being the implementing agency and FAO the executing agency). In these cases, the need to harmonize operational procedures and reduce bureaucratic constraints makes collaboration complex and thus more difficult.

155. The partnerships around the Rotterdam Convention are another good example of how two UN organizations can bring *considerable brokerage power* in the formulation of regulatory frameworks in a domain where there have been tensions between interest groups throughout the process. Clarity of roles and the commitment of competent individuals contributed to positive collaboration between UNEP and FAO on the Convention. However, the key factors were the joint decisions made at the highest level (the governing bodies of both organizations on including Prior Informed Consent (PIC) in the Code of Conduct for the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (adopting a joint text), establishing a joint secretariat to work on voluntary procedures) and the fact that the Secretariat reports to the Conference of Parties of the Convention, which defines budget and countries' assessments.

156. There are also a number of successful partnerships with UN organizations and bodies which are more limited in scope, essentially because of the narrower mandate of the UN partner, but which are nevertheless important contributions to FAO's work. This is the case, for example, of the partnerships between FAO and the UN Statistical Office, which includes, *inter alia*, monitoring of implementation of MDGs.

157. Another example is the partnership for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, based on complementary roles: the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (DOALOS) is a political and policy body for all matters related to oceans; and FAO is the UN specialised agency in fisheries with technical know-how and outreach to countries. The Division judges partnership with FAO very positively, and considers FAO the closest UN organization professionally. There is no Memorandum of Understanding between the two. Rather, the partnership is based on the agreement that governs relations among UN organizations.

158. A few UN organizations do not perceive FAO as an organization sufficiently open to partnerships. UNICEF, for example, believes there is scope for more collaboration with FAO on food and nutrition policy and institutional development. Collaboration with UNESCO has also been difficult in the area of rural education: respective roles and mandates are not clear cut, and the resources FAO has dedicated to these issues are insufficient to fully mobilize the Organization's potential contributions and synergies³³.

159. The International Trade Centre (ITC), a small organization with a specific mandate staffed with specialized professionals, can offer its privileged relationships with some actors along the agri-food supply chain (e.g. export-linked businesses). It is a dynamic organization where extra-budgetary funding has seen an annual increase of 20% in the past four years. Areas for which ITC lacks competence and would be interested in partnerships with FAO include food safety and quality, trade agreements and their implications on agriculture (e.g. SPS), joint programming at country level along the food chain approach ("filières"), technical assistance in

³³ For example, there is only one staff member working in this field, a Senior Rural Education Officer assigned to the Extension, Education and Communication Service.

some modules of ITC projects, and inter-agency initiatives such as the “Integrated Framework of Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries” together with IMF, World Bank, ITC, UNCTAD and WTO.

160. The general perception of these and other organizations’ staff is that certain opportunities for further collaboration are missed. However, relationships between them and FAO have been established in an *ad-hoc* manner, through a few specific projects which, in some cases, have been successful.

161. There have been cases where FAO tended to play a dominating role in the partnership, leading to a lack of ownership by other UN organizations, reducing commitment and contributions from partners. Usually, these were cases where FAO was mandated to both lead the partnership and host its secretariat (e.g. UN System Network for Rural Development, FIVIMS).

162. From the examples above, it is clear that partnerships are particularly fruitful in programmes which are of high relevance to member countries, embedded in FAO’s regular programme of work and for which division of labour and complementarity is natural and based on respective mandates.

163. Another common feature of these UN-based partnerships is the fact that intensive and smooth collaboration at global level is not reflected in a corresponding level of collaboration at country level. This is a general trend for all partnerships and results from a combination of external factors and internal issues, as examined below.

Box 7. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)

The CPF groups 14 inter-governmental organizations, international financing institutions and international public research institutions dealing with forestry issues. It is chaired by the FAO Assistant Director-General of Forestry, and is serviced by the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat in New York.

The CPF is recognized as a successful partnership. It led to concrete collaborations among some of the CPF partners, increased opportunities to communicate with Governments on forest issues and brought more policy coherence among the agencies involved in Forest issues through partners' contributions to policy papers presented to their respective governing bodies.

The strength of the CPF is due to several factors:

- Demand driven: the CPF came in response to Governments' request, with strong backing from the Committee on Forestry and the FAO Council;
- Long nurtured foundation: it is based on previous collaborative arrangements (e.g. the Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests);
- Appropriate partners: it involves the key research institutions and international organizations in the forest sector and reflects quite well the global setting and major programmes in the sector;
- Quite good division of labour among the partners (despite past competition);
- Flexible modality: it is based on voluntary and in-kind contributions. There is no trust fund involved which, according to members interviewed, could generate competition among agencies;
- No institutionalization and a light secretariat with dedicated staff (two professionals at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs working 50-60% of their time on the CPF);
- Sense of ownership and power balance: permitted by FAO keeping a position of assistance to the secretariat without being the secretariat itself; and
- Good cooperation among individuals representing their agencies.

Areas for possible improvement include:

- Increased funding for joint activities (as this is the core business of the partnership). Such increased funding should not come in the form of joint funding, as it would most likely create competition and less collaborative spirit, rather, it should come in the form of extra-budgetary funding for the initiatives' lead agencies;
- Increased core funding from FAO, as the work carried out is well integrated into its normative and technical programme;
- Strengthened collaboration with some partners, in particular with those which are less active but should be fully involved, such as the Secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, or ICRAF. However, a lot of effort is needed to nurture this collaboration. The best way to "bring in" these partners is to involve them in concrete collaboration (thus going beyond just the participation of the heads of agencies to the CPF meetings);
- Improved partnerships in the field. Achievements of a normative and policy nature have not yet been translated into similar collaborative undertakings at country level. Differences between agencies and incompatible operational procedures become more acute when it comes to operations, and the heavy bureaucratic nature of IGOs hinders operational collaboration.

c) Country Level Partnerships

164. Many partnerships with the UN organizations have emerged from the inter-agency coordinating mechanisms. At country level, the evaluation of decentralisation noted that "although this had not always been the case in the past, FAO is now usually regarded as a cooperative player in the international community, in particular in the UN country team, where it is generally as much involved as other UN specialised agencies".

165. The recent survey carried out by MOPAN³⁴ found that “FAO appears to be an active participant in inter-agency coordination efforts on specific issues. [...] With regard to broader coordination efforts, FAO is generally perceived as a willing but minor actor. [...] Overall, FAO’s coordination efforts give the impression that it is constrained by the Organization’s limited human and financial resources.”

166. With respect to the latter point, a survey of FAO Representatives on FAO participation in inter-agency arrangements at field level (January 2005) highlighted limited human and financial resources as the main recurrent internal constraint to FAO Representatives’ effective participation in the United Nations Country Teams (UNCT). When asked about their relationships with the United Nations Resident Coordination System, the FAORs have overwhelmingly responded that the main problem they face was the lack of support from headquarters and Regional and Subregional Offices in their efforts to participate in the UNCT mechanism. In addition, they do not feel appropriately guided and informed on the developments occurring within the UNDG, nor the corporate-level relationships between FAO and other UN organizations. The Independent Evaluation of FAO’s Decentralization and the Independent Review of the Technical Cooperation Programme also highlighted the need for FAO Representatives to have resources at country level for supporting thematic groups and other agency inter-agency collaboration mechanisms. As an interim response, US\$ 1.5 million has been set aside from Technical Cooperation Programme for funding allocations under the Technical Cooperation Programme facility at the disposal of FAO Representatives.³⁵

167. FAO Representatives also noted deficiencies of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) system itself which tends to weaken the buy-in of other organizations. This is particularly true for specialised agencies such as FAO whose technical perspective, operational structure and specific budgeting cycles are not necessarily in line with those of UNDP. In large part, this situation relates to the ambiguity of the roles of UNDP, whose Representatives are generally also the Resident Coordinator, thereby creating a risk of conflict of interests. It will be difficult for the RC to fulfil his/her impartial coordinating role, under the prevailing situation in which the RC and UNDP representatives are linked.

168. Lastly, the CCA/UNDAF has not yet fulfilled the promise of substantive joint programming. FAORs have found that the UNCTs’ joint undertakings present some weaknesses: the Thematic Groups are often inefficient and there is insufficient dialogue with the relevant government entities. They noted that CCAs/UNDAs may require better tailoring to country realities, particularly the capacity of government, alignment with country priorities and other processes (such as the poverty reduction strategies), and more extensive dialogue with government on the contents of UN support to a given country. Joint assistance strategies other than CCAs/UNDAs show all potential assistance (not just the small portion of the UN system), and may expand beyond the handful of countries where they already exist. Mozambique, for example, has abolished the UNDAF. In countries where there is already a country assessment, it has been decided that a CCA would not be necessary.

169. FAO partnerships at country level will undoubtedly be shaped in future by this evolving context of development cooperation that includes new aid architecture, wherein budget support, sector-wide approaches (SWAs) and poverty-reduction strategies (PRSs) may become more prevalent. As technical cooperation, international support and direct aid are increasingly provided through programme frameworks, FAO will need to have a clear policy statement, buttressed by

³⁴ The MOPAN survey 2004 Synthesis Report: UNDP-AfDB and FAO. The survey’s results should be taken with some caution as it covers only six countries and the methodology is based purely on perceptions of bilateral agency staff in the countries.

³⁵ PC 93/6(a) “Policy and Operational Framework of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) - Strengthening the TCP - Management’s Proposals.

guidance to its field offices and more flexible procedures, if it is to position itself proactively within this evolving context.

170. As indicated in the overview, there is significant bilateral collaboration with other UN organizations. Collaboration with other UN organizations is important in emergency-related work, where the UN system has made major efforts in the recent years to increase coordination and harmonization and FAO participation in the Consolidated Appeal Process. Some of this collaboration has been formalised through bilateral joint letters such as those with WFP (see below) and UNHCR, one of the most important UN partners at country level and, third only to WFP and OCHA. FAO and UNHCR collaborate in various areas related to assistance to refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. Collaborative projects include joint needs assessments of agricultural relief and rehabilitation needs, information exchange, joint programmes (including the promotion of food security), and the provision of agricultural inputs to achieve self-reliance for returnees and refugees.

d) Partnerships among the Rome-based agencies

171. These relationships have improved noticeably in the past few years, and progress has been made in carrying out joint advocacy work. There have been joint statements at policy conferences and agreements to cooperate at country level. Bilateral joint letters have been or are in the process of being prepared with each of the two other agencies, and focal points for IFAD and WFP have been nominated. In a joint publication³⁶ presented at the March 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development, IFAD, WFP and FAO jointly introduced the “twin-track approach”, a conceptual framework for fighting hunger and poverty. The International Alliance Against Hunger (IAAH), established after the World Food Summit: *five years later*, also reflects the intention of the three organizations to advocate together at global and country levels for a combination of political will and practical action required to bring about rapid reductions in the incidence of hunger worldwide (see Box 8 for further details). The three agencies worked together on issues related to Poverty and Hunger for the Panel on Threats and Challenges, feeding into the Secretary-General’s document for the Millennium Summit +5, and joint publications and side-events are being prepared for the Summit. Lately, in a joint public event, the three agencies launched the Millennium Project.

172. Today’s partnerships among the three-Rome based agencies are still marked by a legacy of uneven and sometimes tense relationships. There are many reasons for this, but the most obvious is linked to the over-lapping or contiguous mandates among the three agencies. They all work on food, and FAO and IFAD both work in agriculture with different perspectives and roles which are intrinsically inter-related. This institutional issue has been, at times, combined with personalities and a culture of competition among staff.

173. Progress made on advocacy has not yet fully translated at the working level, despite some very good examples of collaboration in technical domains. Sometimes, FAO is perceived by staff of the two other agencies as fighting for leadership it does not necessarily have the capacity and resources to support.

174. Overall collaboration with IFAD is broader than with WFP. In principle, FAO and IFAD can collaborate on all aspects of rural development, with the two agencies having a quite delineated role (IFAD being a financing institution which FAO is clearly not). In fact, most of the collaboration between FAO and IFAD involves a certain amount of funding from IFAD, which provides significant technical grants to FAO, beyond the Cooperative Programme³⁷. This

³⁶ Reducing Poverty and Hunger: the critical role of financing for food, agriculture and rural development.

³⁷ It is hard to assess the importance of the funds that IFAD makes available to FAO outside the Cooperative Programme because the framework agreement for grants and loans was signed only recently (June 2004). However, since then, approximately \$10,000,000 have been committed or are in the process of being committed, over a time span of 36 months, and another \$2,000,000 are in negotiation.

illustrates the nature of FAO-IFAD partnerships which appear more complementary than based on competition. Technical collaboration at global level has been substantive and appreciated from both sides in domains such as livestock (e.g. the International Network for Family Poultry Development) and gender (e.g. SEAGA).

175. However, at country level, IFAD does not generally work with FAO. The recent evaluation of FAO's Decentralization³⁸ has found that *"IFAD is often the largest donor to agriculture. FAO has both technical expertise and a country office, and yet the IFAD piloting of country presence has tended to be with UNDP, WFP or other agencies, not with FAO. FAO, admittedly extremely short of resources, has not been prepared to provide any services, including technical without charge. IFAD has thus looked to organizations which will provide free services and partner on projects."*

176. WFP has a narrower mandate than FAO. The range of potential areas for partnerships is thus more limited, in particular in the field, since most of its activities are now emergency-related. Therefore, the nomination of the Director of the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division as WFP focal point appears like the most logical choice for enhancing collaboration between the two organizations. The most significant and long-standing partnership between the two agencies has been on crop and food supply assessments. According to the Evaluation of Strategic Objective A3, it was recognized by *"both governments and the international donor community [...] as valuable in raising awareness of impending food crises"*, though they do not provide sufficient information for the use of programming. Both agencies are currently involved in in-depth methodological work on needs assessment, and efforts should be made to ensure optimal collaboration where division of labour is not clear-cut. Other collaboration includes school garden projects, joint seed and food distribution in Africa, and use of WFP logistics capacity for FAO input distribution.

177. A good example of collaboration with WFP at country level has been the project in Mozambique *"Support to the Coordinating Structure of Food Security and Early Warning Information Systems of the SETSAN"*³⁹. In this case, one factor that may have facilitated collaboration between the two organizations was that the project team leader had been both a WFP and an FAO staff member.

178. **Recommendation 7:** *Enhance country-level partnerships with UN organizations, especially for the pursuit of the MDGs*

- a) Opportunities for partnerships with agencies having strong field presence and operational capacity should be more systematically explored. They should build on the models of existing corporate agreements with a clear division of labour (e.g. FAO-UNHCR Joint Letter, Memoranda of Understanding, or similar arrangements with UNICEF, ITC).
- b) National Priority Frameworks (based on the model proposed in the Evaluation of FAO's Decentralisation and approved by the Director-General) will help to provide potential partners an indication of FAO's intentions in the country and its capacity and resources requirements. This would provide, in turn, the basis for FAO Representatives to identify areas where partnership should be most sought. FAO may wish to build on work already undertaken by WHO on its Country Cooperation Strategies.
- c) FAO Representatives should be encouraged to identify partners at country level and seek agreements for specific purposes (e.g. UNICEF-FAO Memorandum of Understanding in Sudan for the promotion of food security in Sudan).

³⁸ Reference to decentralization evaluation.

³⁹ (UTF/MOZ/071/MOA)

179. **Recommendation 8:** *Clarify roles among the Rome-based agencies*

While it is recognised that the bilateral joint letters between FAO and each of the other two Rome-based organizations constitute an important step towards strengthening collaboration, FAO, IFAD and WFP should make a joint policy statement in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the three heads of organizations. Such a document could identify areas of collaboration and clarify division of labour, not only on the basis of respective mandates, but also considering each organization's capacity and resources. The basis of the policy statement should be the above-mentioned joint conceptual framework of the twin-track approach, and should aim at concretizing it at various levels and through various modalities of partnerships.

Box 8. The International Alliance Against Hunger (IAAH): Reaching an Interim Phase

To date, out of 89 countries which have expressed willingness to establish National Alliances Against Hunger, 34 have actually carried out activities aimed at organizing them (14 are led by CSOs and 20 by governments, as originally planned). As of February 2005, about 15 of the 34 countries carry out activities on a regular basis.

In 2004, a strategy paper on the Alliance was prepared jointly by FAO, IFAD, IPGRI (on behalf of the CGIAR), WFP, the International NGO/CSO Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty, and the Ad Hoc Group of International NGOs.

Launched in October 2003, the Alliance is at an early stage. Nonetheless, optimal progress on achievements may still be considered as being constrained. The human and financial resources assigned are insufficient for the Alliance to operate effectively, and building stronger ownership among partners remains a major challenge. As interviewees in partner agencies pointed out, more time is needed for the leading agencies to own the IAAH and define their roles and contributions - without losing their identity - avoiding institutional capture by any one organization. Greater ownership would be reflected, among other things, in financial contributions from all partners.

In addition, competing partnerships are present at country level (such as the IICA-led National Alliance for Agricultural and Rural Development or the IFAD-led Livelihood Coalition). The IAAH must open up to opportunities presented by other structures which are already present at country level and contribute directly or indirectly to the IAAH goals.

As confirmed by the auto-evaluation carried out in 2004, there is also some confusion between the respective roles of the IAAH and the UN Network for Rural Development, although the Network could potentially help translate the political will expressed by the IAAH into technical and on-the-ground work. The Evaluation Team believes that an institutional merger of the two secretariats could greatly benefit both initiatives.

D.2 Partnerships with the World Bank

180. The collaboration with the World Bank, regional development banks and international funds is carried out mostly through the Investment Centre Division (TCI). TCI, with funding from multilateral institutions, promotes investment in agriculture and rural development by assisting developing countries to identify and formulate effective and sustainable agricultural policies, programmes and projects. Such partnerships are not covered by this evaluation, as explained previously. While it is difficult to understand FAO's relationships with those organizations without assessing the main partnership which links them to FAO, there are a number of other joint collaborative initiatives, in particular with the World Bank, which are independent from the Cooperative Programme and from which some lessons have been drawn.

181. Much of the collaboration with the World Bank is initiated by individual staff and limited to exchange of information. Spontaneous and informal, these "partnerships" work well and

contribute to mutual benefit. Collaboration between FAO and the World Bank has not always been smooth. The partnerships and achievements of the Africa Stockpiles Programme, for example, have been affected by a series of factors, including poor management of the funds coming from GEF, lack of recognition of FAO's potential contribution and little influence of FAO on the decision-making for the use of the fund. It seems that partnerships with the World Bank are most successful when no major funding is involved and in specific technical areas where FAO has definite expertise. This is the case with joint work on water and irrigation and land tenure. Collaboration on FAO-STAT is also positive with FAO benefiting from the WB's data on poverty and the WB from FAO's agricultural and food data.

D.3 Partnerships with Other IGOs, Including Regional Bodies

182. It is difficult to find common features and patterns in partnerships with IGOs. They are numerous and vary widely in terms of purposes, modalities and intensity of the relationships. The effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of these partnerships deserves to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. FAO and IGOs have in common the type of constituency they represent (governments), although in most cases, FAO has a wider membership than its IGO partners. For that reason and the fact that FAO works in areas where partners are also mandated, delineation of roles and responsibilities is sometimes less clear-cut. There is thus a need to examine them carefully and divide labour to avoid overlapping, duplication and competition.

183. There are many organizations with a regional focus (e.g. IGAD, SADC, IICA). In light of the increasing regional integration arrangements, there is scope for FAO to strengthen its strategic partnerships with organizations involved in regional cooperation and integration efforts.

184. FAO's relationship with IICA was assessed as part of the evaluation of FAO's decentralisation, which pointed out the coincidence of mandates, and concluded that, despite an agreement signed between the two organizations in 2002, there was not yet significant joint action. The evaluation recommended strengthening efforts to identify areas for collaboration based on respective comparative advantages.

185. The partnership between FAO and the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) illustrates the benefits of collaboration, but unbalanced contributions may eventually jeopardize the collaboration between the two. Some aspects of the CFC mandate overlap with FAO's programmes on trade and commodities, for example the CFC's role of facilitating "*access by Member Countries to reliable sources of information on developments and forecasts in the commodity sectors*"⁴⁰. A number of FAO Inter-Governmental Commodity Groups (IGGs) were designated International Commodity Bodies (ICBs), and the CFC has made grants and loans available under their technical supervision. The Commodities and Trade Division (ESC), which serves as secretariat for the FAO-IGGs, is thus involved in the formulation and review of CFC-funded projects. ESC's functions are proposing and endorsing project proposals for CFC funding and acting as a supervisory body. A recent auto-evaluation of the programme reviewed the relationships between the two organizations and concluded that "*the benefits from CFC projects are generally considered to be high by the recipient countries, but ESC staff members view the costs of their inputs as inadequately compensated by the CFC, and recommend that the Memorandum of Understanding between FAO and the CFC be re-negotiated. The CFC itself presses for FAO to do more on project formulation and cover what they call orphan commodities, though this would be difficult in the face of declining FAO resources.*"

186. Mandates, possible synergies and division of labour need to be carefully examined in considering partnership with IGOs. In that respect, thematic and/or geographical (regional) in-depth reviews of partnerships with IGOs could be useful. In particular, they could include looking at ways of strengthening partnerships with regional IGOs on regional cooperation and integration.

⁴⁰ CFC Action Plan 2003-07.

E. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE STRATEGY

E.1 Overall Management of Partnerships

187. As noted in previous sections, partnerships are managed by various units and individuals in FAO. Thus, relationships with CGIAR and research institutions are dealt with by the Research, Extension and Training Division and relationships with international and regional development banks (IFIs) by the Investment Centre. The Conference, Council and Government Relations Branch serves as the Focal Point for relations with all IGOs outside the UN system, with the exception of funding institutions. It maintains a corporate computerized data base on external organizations participating in meetings jointly with the Unit for Strategic Policy Advice on the UN System (SADN) and the Resources and Strategic Partnerships Unit (TCDS). Recently, in order to strengthen FAO's partnerships with the Rome-based agencies, two focal points have been nominated in the Investment Centre and the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division to deal with FAO's relationships with IFAD and WFP, respectively. Often, these individuals and units are those where partnerships are initiated and are responsible for FAO's contribution to the partnership.

188. There are two units with a corporate mandate to provide guidance on *strategic* partnerships. These are: (i) the Unit for Strategic Policy Advice on the UN System directly attached to the Director-General's Office supported by the Liaison Office with the United Nations – New York (LONY), and (ii) the Resources and Strategic Partnerships Unit created in February 2002 to regroup various functions relating to partnerships previously dispersed in different units. This was done in the context of the reform of the Technical Cooperation Department. In addition, due to the highly specific nature of the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), responsibility for matters relating to it has been bestowed upon the Administration and Finance Department (AF).

189. SADN's main functions relate to monitoring and maintaining an overview of UN system policy developments of interest to FAO, including in particular those related to the UN system Chief Executives Board (CEB), its High-Level Committee on Programmes and other inter-agency coordination mechanisms. It advises on how FAO can contribute to and internalize appropriately the outcomes of UN system policy discussions at inter-governmental and inter-agency levels. It acts as the organizational focal point for interaction with UN system organizations and bodies. SADN also provides advice to technical staff participating in inter-agency groups (e.g. UN Water, UN Energy, UN Oceans), or wishing to embark on initiatives involving inter-agency cooperation. Furthermore, the unit acts as a documentation and information filter on UN-related news and issues. The unit has limited resources (two professionals supported by four general service staff) and no current functional statement.

190. Based on its functional statement, TCDS' functions regarding partnerships⁴¹ are to:

- assist the Assistant Director-General of the Technical Cooperation Department in conducting strategic negotiations with public and private partners, with a view to consolidating, diversifying and expanding funding sources; and
- take the lead in the formulation and definition of FAO action vis-à-vis its present and future partners among NGOs, professional organizations and the private sector and coordinate the relations of the Organization with these entities.

191. TCDS has one professional to manage relationships with the private sector, two professionals and one part-time associate professional officer for links with Civil Society Organizations, and one professional for links with the UNDG. In addition, TCDS also deals with newer forms of partnerships which are not covered by this evaluation, including decentralised cooperation linking local authorities from developed and developing countries. The UNDG function is new for TCDS, as it is a recent relationship (FAO joined the UNDG in 2001). Since it

⁴¹ TCDS's functional statement includes other functions which are not related to partnerships.

was initially given an operational and country-level focus, UNDG matters were deemed to be better housed within the Technical Cooperation Department rather than in SADN.

192. Notwithstanding the historical background behind them, the present institutional arrangements pose a number of challenges which can be divided into two categories: (i) they do not reflect a holistic approach to partnerships, and (ii) they do not optimally carry forward the various potential dimensions of FAO's strategy for partnerships.

a) *Limited Holistic Approach*

193. TCDS covers only partially the most important category of partners (i.e. the UN System), despite the concept underpinning the creation of TCDS (more centralisation and coordination of partnership functions). There are obvious overlapping functions between TCDS and SADN. UNDG has expanded to become another New York-based UN system-wide coordination mechanism with functions not always distinct from those of CEB and HLCP. The same issues and the same organizational representatives are increasingly involved with UNDG and CEB/HLCP meetings, with a blurring of responsibilities. Both are inter-agency policy mechanisms, where the ultimate decision-makers are Executive Heads. In addition, HLCP has recently created a Task Group on operational activities (for the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System). This is expected to provide a better interface between UNDG and the rest of the system, and the UNDG has as a standing annual priority, to ensure stronger linkages with HLCP and CEB. The current division of labour between TCDS and SADN does not adequately reflect this evolution.

b) *Restricted Interpretation of the Strategy*

194. TCDS's prime function *vis-à-vis* partnerships is based on a restricted concept of partnerships. The functional statement conveys the perception that partners are sought primarily for increasing the extra-budgetary resources of the Organization. While such opportunities, when they exist, should not be excluded, this is not the main purpose for FAO to entertain partnerships. Such an emphasis is believed to undermine other more substantive roles of the unit, including the active promotion of partnerships based on a clear identification of the type of partners, and a broad range of purposes and modalities.

195. The staff of the Organization is not sufficiently familiar with other roles of TCDS, in particular regarding partnerships with the private sector. This is partly due to the lack of clarity of the function itself. As defined by the *Private Sector Focal Point*, this position deals with a wide range of strategic and operational issues related to the private sector: facilitation of private investment in developing countries, development of business models, policy advice to member countries related to private sector development, issues related to corporate social responsibility in agriculture and food industry, in-house dissemination of information on calls for proposals, and management of FAO's partnerships, including the review of each partnership and providing the secretariat of the Sponsorship Committee. There appears to be confusion between the provision of technical assistance to countries (i.e. facilitation of private investment in developing countries and policy advice to member countries which are/should be part of the prerogative of other divisions) and development and promotion of partnerships (other functions listed). In practice, the officer is overwhelmed by operational issues (dealing with the screening of companies and the sponsorship committee matters⁴²) and does not provide strategic advice to technical units, or promote private sector partnerships, in an environment where experiences have been mixed and where there is significant resistance to collaboration with the private sector.

196. The role of TCDS regarding *civil society organizations* is better known, as most divisions have had experiences of collaboration and interaction with TCDS. In addition, the regional

⁴² TCDS is responsible for monitoring the process, controlling the budget/finance and managing all correspondence between FAO and the private company. Throughout the whole process, TCDS provides advice to the technical department on how to manage the relationship. TCDS is essentially seen as an administrative step.

NGO/CSO Liaison Officer in Accra, the focal points in the other Regional Offices and the internal group of NGO/CSO focal points certainly contributed to NGO/CSO interaction, and to the sharing of information and experience throughout the Organization. However, this positive picture must be qualified by an insufficiently focused mandate of the internal group, and the reliance on individual willingness to be active as focal points. As mentioned previously, the group of focal points ceased to be functional a year ago.

197. **Recommendation 9:** *Improve partnership management*

The Evaluation Team recognizes that there is no unique solution to address these challenges. The adoption of one option over another depends where emphasis needs to be placed. The latter may even evolve with time. The Evaluation Team believes that there is still a need to refine the partnership strategy, in particular for non-state actors. Therefore, more attention should be given in defining analytical frameworks within which these partnerships should be placed, as well as types of partners in relation to purposes and modalities. Under the zero-cost implications constraint, the Evaluation Team puts forward two main options:

Proposal A: Towards More Content-Driven Strategic Management of Partnerships

- a) All the functions relating to the UN and IGOs should be merged in the same unit. Responsibility for UNDG could be placed in SADN, with a transfer of relevant staff and non-staff resources. There is a strong rationale for maintaining and strengthening a single unit dedicated to the UN system, given (i) that FAO is embedded in this system, shaping and being shaped by its policy context; (ii) the depth and breadth of FAO partnerships with UN system organizations; and (iii) the continuing demand from developed and developing countries for services and products which require cooperation among UN system organizations, both on a bilateral and system-wide basis. It is therefore proposed that SADN remain the primary source of policy advice on the UN system and that responsibilities for UN system inter-agency coordination mechanisms – CEB, HLCP and UNDG – be consolidated in this unit (along with relevant staff and non-staff resources), without prejudice to the responsibilities of competent focal point units for substantive matters relating to cooperation and partnerships with UN system organizations. WHO and UNESCO have already placed responsibility for these inter-agency mechanisms in a single organizational unit, with similarities to SADN. Both organizations have stated that this step has been extremely beneficial as it enables them to have a better overview of the policy issues discussed, ensures greater consistency in their positions across these mechanisms, facilitates greater continuity of contacts among counterparts in other organizations, and generally reduces fragmentation, while heightening capacity for strategic analysis and response.
- b) Lead and responsibility for strategic partnerships with non-state actors could be transferred to the technical units which have the most relevant programme of work for coordinating those strategies, and can best provide these relationships with a strategic content. This is already the case for research institutions. Such additional responsibilities can only be effective with the transfer of resources corresponding to these functions. The technical units could take the lead through a Partnership Coordinator (former TCDS focal point) who would work through networks involving officers from other relevant units. Under this proposal, and to ensure wider ownership of partnership within the Organization, internal networking and an inter-departmental and inter-disciplinary vision of partnerships would be fundamental in these functions.
- c) Technical divisions should retain prime responsibility for the partnerships they manage (as is the case now).
- d) Partnership coordinators in the various units where partnership resources would be transferred should link with decentralised offices with the objective of promoting, supporting and strengthening partnerships at country level.

- e) Operational matters linked to screening and repository of agreements should be led by the Legal Office.
- f) Regional, subregional and country offices should have greater authority and autonomy to dispose of resources for engaging in partnerships at their respective regional, subregional and country levels.

Drawbacks to such a management structure include the potential lack of a holistic view of partnerships within the Organization. This is particularly important in view of (i) the increasing importance of multistakeholder approaches in the implementation of FAO's work (especially normative work) and (ii) the overlapping between categories of partners which do not fit such a segmented approach to management of partnerships. There could be two ways of ensuring a more concerted approach to partnerships:

- A Partnership Committee could be established (see recommendation below). It would be composed of those directly responsible for strategic partnerships in the assigned divisions. The group would deal with strategic issues relating to partnerships (e.g. revise the Corporate partnership strategy, in particular in view of the revision of the strategic framework), advise Senior Management on partnerships, ensure coordination and avoid overlapping, and consolidate and disseminate partnership experiences throughout the Organization.
- An Assistant Director-General could be nominated as the Chairperson of the Partnership Committee. The ADG would also serve as a Corporate Liaison officer with external partners (partly the model of UNIDO with the Non-State Actors).

Proposal B: Towards a More Holistic Approach to Partnerships

This proposal is closer to the existing structure and the concept behind the establishment of TCDS.

- a) All functions relating to strategic partnerships with main external partners, excluding funding partnerships handled by TC, would be merged in one unit: the Partnership and Coordination Unit. The roles of this unit would be (in general terms): (i) to provide strategic guidance on all partnerships at all levels of the Organization, including with decentralized offices; (ii) to consolidate and disseminate partnership experiences throughout the Organization. The most appropriate location of such a unit would also require further analysis for which the Evaluation does not have the basis, but a central neutral position would be necessary.
- b) Above elements c, e, and f remain the same in such a proposal.

While it offers a place for a more holistic approach to partnerships, Proposal B does not address the risk of becoming a "liaison office" or an additional bureaucratic step in communication and losing strategic focus (one of the reasons why the former Office of External Relations was dismantled). This would lead to a lack of integration between substance and the liaison function. It also carries the risk of generating a homogenized rather than differentiated approach to different categories of partners, with different purposes and modalities of functioning (i.e. state and non-state partners, which can be further divided into UN and IGO relationships on one hand, and NGO/CSO, private sector, research institutions relationships on the other. Mixed solutions are also possible which locate focal points for some forms of partnership with the most relevant units while centralizing others with a unit responsible for UN-IGO liaison.

E.2 Addressing Reputation Risk

198. As discussed above, there are reputation risks associated with partnerships with the private sector, and more generally with non-state constituencies, which may represent interests divergent from FAO's mission and may bring undue influence or, in any case, reduce the Organization's credibility by damaging its image of impartiality. There is evidence that the neutrality, objectivity and credibility of the Organization have been questioned at times. In

addition to these “technical” risks, the Organization must safeguard itself from being associated with organizations that have a negative image in the public eye and do not comply with the basic principles upon which the UN system works. While this is a cross-cutting risk that the Organization must deal with in managing its partnerships, it is of particular concern in the cases of expert advice and when funding is involved.

199. A number of measures have been taken in the past few years to address this risk, and more recently the report of the auto-evaluation of PE 221A1: Human Nutrition Requirements highlighted the need to clearly define mechanisms to exclude any possibility of processes being undermined in the future, by way of financial or other support, to further narrow interests. To date, there are no clearly documented procedures for the convening of Expert Consultations and Technical Workshops by FAO along with other UN partners. Procedures have largely evolved over time as issues have arisen, and there is a lack of uniformity across the Organization and among UN organizations with regard to this normative role.

200. The Sponsorship Committee (SC), FAO’s mechanism for assessing the risk of partnerships with individual companies⁴³, was established by the Director-General in May 2001 to screen companies potentially approached, primarily to sponsor the WFS:*fyI*. Committee members are Assistant Directors-General and/or Director-level staff from the Technical Cooperation Department, Audit, Legal Office, and Administration and Finance. At the time of its establishment, its principal activity was screening Fortune 500 companies in order to identify those to approach for sponsorship of the WFS:*fyI*.

201. Since August 2001, the committee has been supported by a Working Group (WG)⁴⁴ which reviews all potential sponsorships. The WG screens every proposed partner against a list of criteria; checks whether the company is a current supplier, or is bidding on a tender; researches the company on websites, including on ethics and environmental issues; and consults within FAO units. Finally, the WG makes its recommendation to the SC.

202. Although the SC was created for the purpose of selecting and guiding relations with “sponsors,” it is now intended as the mechanism for the Organization to approve or decline *any* type of partnership or cooperation with *any* entity which has links with the private sector.⁴⁵ As a result, the work of the SC today has grown considerably and beyond its original mandate and scope, reviewing all private sector partners, including foundations and NGOs with links to the private sector. The change in responsibility has been now recognized and formalized in a recent Director General’s Bulletin⁴⁶.

203. While the screening mechanism is valuable, it has some weaknesses:

- the screening process tends to apply the same criteria to all future prospective partners regardless of type, and looks more for the negative, without considering other factors which might balance out a shortcoming. This is partly linked to the history of the establishment of the SC;
- while few private entities have been rejected (out of 239 entries recorded by TCDS, 207 have been accepted as sponsors), proposals are mainly for rather small-scale amounts,

⁴³ The functioning of the Sponsorship Committee and its Working Group has been analysed in depth by external consultant Laurie Olsen in two internal reports: first in 2003 in the framework of a study commissioned by TCDS and again in the framework of this evaluation.

⁴⁴ The Private Sector Focal Point (TCDS) is the secretary of the working group. The latter also includes staff from AUD, GID and LEG.

⁴⁵ As noted in the MTP 2004-09 and in the Office Memorandum of 29 October 2004 - ODG.

⁴⁶ Director General’s Bulletin 2005/28 of 16 June 2005.

most of which are for TeleFood. Only 27 of the 239 related to FAO's substantive work. The cost-effectiveness of the process is thus dubious;

- criteria developed for selecting sponsors - a very visible form of marketing agreement - are applied to potential partnerships which involve neither sponsorship agreements nor for-profit-companies;
- the SC tends to evaluate the potential partners, regardless of the context of the proposed partnership, which may be key to assessing the suitability of a partner;
- the SC tends to have essentially a clearance role rather than a facilitating and policy role. In practice, the SC process is perceived as a bureaucratic barrier;
- staff has insufficient knowledge (in particular in the decentralised offices) of the current procedures regarding FAO's relationships with the private sector; and
- the SC has not been involved in screening all of FAO's private sector relationships.

204. A number of key recommendations aimed at ensuring the fulfilment of a transparent, objective and neutral process are made in the report of the auto-evaluation of PE 221A1: Human Nutrition Requirements. They include, among others, the following:

- preparation of an official manual clearly outlining the procedures and protocols to be adhered to in the convening, conduct and reporting of such meetings;
- in domains where there is high sensitivity and risk of undue influence, financial resources for expert meetings and other normative activities should be provided solely from regular programme funds or a pool of extra-budgetary funds of the FAO and other UN organizations involved.

205. The Evaluation team supports these recommendations and their application in other scientific areas of FAO's mandate.

206. **Recommendation 10:** *Streamline procedures*

The mandate and functions of the Sponsorship Committee were reviewed by TCDS and the Working Group with a view to addressing some of the above-mentioned issues as well as strengthening the facilitating role of the mechanism. The results were translated into Director-General's Bulletin No. 2005/28, published on 16 June 2005. The Evaluation Team recommends:

- a) A first screening of potential partners could be carried out prior to approaching them, so that they are already "pre-approved". Signatories of the Global Compact and companies with a recognized record in Corporate Social Responsibility could be "pre-selected", and a screening process of all partners could be outsourced to an agency (used by the Global Compact and/or some other UN organizations).
- b) To relieve the Committee from screening the bulk of minor partnerships and, in addition to the pre-approval process suggested above, "small-scale" and/or punctual partnerships should be ultimately the responsibility of the manager of the Division where the partnership is initiated, with the support of the Legal Office (as was proposed in the case of the potential partnerships for the International Year of the Rice). The private sector focal point should be systematically kept informed.

207. **Recommendation 11:** *Assess partners in the context of the partnership, weighing risks against potential benefits*

- a) In examining potential partners, consideration should be given to their strengths or other contributions with which they might complement FAO's capabilities⁴⁷. The selection criteria used by FAO are not adequate for a proper evaluation of partnerships. FAO should consider the approach used by UNIDO⁴⁸: "*Perfect partners who fully comply with all the principles of a UNIDO partnership will not necessarily be found. Rather than "perfection", it is the willingness and ability of prospective partners to comply that counts.*" In the case of the private sector, for example, UNDP further adds that they "*should be assessed not only on past activities but also on current attitude, commitment and future objectives.*"
- b) The decision to partner should be linked to the proposed partnership. FAO must balance risk with opportunity. Such a change in practice in the functions of the SC would necessitate the Committee having a strategic approach to partnership, and acting as the vehicle for bringing such a strategy forward. The Sponsorship Committee should be transformed into a Partnership Committee (PC), the functions of which would be to (i) provide the Director-General and the Organization with strategic guidance regarding partnerships with the private sector and non-state actors in general, and (ii) review and endorse major partnerships involving non-state actors. This is partly in line with the recently approved Director-General's Bulletin mentioned above, which proposes similar functions and renames the Sponsorship Committee the "Private Sector Partnerships Advisory Committee". However, the Bulletin describes a much simpler committee, charged with dealing with the ethical/legal/image and other risks to partnerships with the Private Sector, and does not cover all types of partners.
- c) The review of partnerships should be based on a clear definition of partners, purposes, modalities, incentives and motives as well as an analysis of risks⁴⁹. The PC could be assisted by a group of individuals which would be specifically in charge of assessing, addressing and managing the risks associated to the partnership.

208. **Recommendation 12:** *Communicate the procedures effectively throughout the Organization*

The revised policies and procedures should be disseminated to all staff of the Organization. In addition, the possibility of preparing a training module in collaboration with AFHO should be explored, in order to build and enhance staff capacity for initiating and managing partnerships.

V. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

209. **FAO needs to refine its corporate strategy and approach to partnerships with external actors, in particular non-state actors**, in order to ensure that the Organization's priorities come to bear in its partnerships and that fragmented efforts are avoided. To this end, the considerations highlighted below need to be taken into account.

210. The evaluation was faced with great difficulties in obtaining a comprehensive picture of who FAO's partners are, what FAO is partnerships for and how FAO partners. One of the reasons

⁴⁷ UNDP policy statement on Working with the Business Sector, New York, 2004 (page 8).

⁴⁸ UNIDO Business Partnerships for Industrial Development, Partnership Guide, UNIDO, Vienna, 2002 (p. 17).

⁴⁹ Laurie Olsen proposed, in an internal working document prepared for the Evaluation, a template for the creation of a partnership which could be used as a basis for reviewing the screening process and operational policies.

for this relates to the informal nature of most collaborative arrangements, and the lack of written agreement between organizations working together makes it difficult to capture the partnerships. While the Evaluation Team concluded positively on the merits of most informal partnerships, **there are advantages in written forms of arrangements**, in particular in cases where collaboration can potentially cover a wide range of activities. More specifically, Memoranda of Understanding can be a useful step for strengthening collaboration, to the extent that they define areas of collaboration and a clear division of labour, taking into account the capacity and resources of each partner.

211. There are other reasons for these difficulties, which, in fact, reflect some of the issues the Organization needs to address. They include:

- The **lack of a consolidated source of information on partners and partnerships**. There are multiple dispersed efforts to collect and monitor this information, but no systematic, centralized depository. The most important exercise in this regard was carried out for the Medium Term Plans. The importance of having a global picture of partnerships cannot be over-emphasized; on the one hand, because of the need for FAO to build strategic partnerships and on the other, because of the risk that individual officers may pursue partnerships without their being firmly anchored to FAO's areas of comparative advantage. The units in charge of managing partnerships should make an effort to consolidate their information and knowledge using organizational channels and existing information systems. This would enable a corporate information base and sharing of experiences and interactive practices, including multi-stakeholders' and open dialogue sessions.
- The **lack of agreement on a definition of partnership** and even of partners, making information collected insufficiently reliable and useable without careful examination. It is critical that clear corporate policies and strategies be guided by a common understanding of partnerships, intended as a voluntary association of partners, with a common interest and complementary resources, who agree to carry on an enterprise through which each partner intends to realize benefits, and for the sake of which they are willing to share risks.

212. **FAO works intensively in collaboration** with other organizations, both horizontally, looking for complementarities on inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary themes, and vertically, upstream (research) and downstream (outreach). The Organization links mostly with traditional partners (UN, IGOs, Research Institutions), but increasingly with non-state actors, in nearly all of its areas of work. FAO has a long history of partnerships with external agencies and, overall, FAO has incorporated partnerships into its mode of operating, at least with traditional partners.

213. There is **resistance among some staff to partnerships with non-state actors**, in particular the private sector. Among the most significant reasons is a belief, among many, that the private sector does not sufficiently represent public interest, and working with it, while dealing with other constituencies, will make it difficult to balance objectives of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability.

214. There is a general satisfaction with FAO as a partner. Staff involved in partnerships are in general highly devoted and committed to the partnerships they manage. There are common denominators in what external organizations and partners are looking for in partnerships with FAO:

- FAO's convening role and ability to work with multiple constituencies. Innovative multi-stakeholder processes such as those used for the formulation of regulatory frameworks have been very much appreciated;
- FAO as a world-wide information resource; and
- FAO's world-wide outreach.

215. Surprisingly, relatively few partners, particularly research institutions, look to FAO for its expertise, and they mostly do so in the specific areas of work where FAO is undeniably recognised as being the world-wide technical leader (e.g. fisheries, forestry).

216. FAO is sometimes perceived as a poor organization, especially by the UN partners, with little flexibility in terms of resources (financial and staff) to fully play its expected role in managing and contributing to partnerships. Indeed, in some cases, insufficient financial and staff resources impacted on the effectiveness of the partnerships, and, not surprisingly, the partnerships which work best are those that are fully embedded in the regular programme of work and/or benefiting from substantial extra-budgetary funding. There is a need to recognize partnership as an investment which requires dedicated human and financial resources.

217. **If FAO is to keep its role as a neutral broker, it should ensure a more balanced representation** among the variety of actors within and between categories of partners. This requires, among other things, to be more inclusive in the selection of partners, in particular non-state actors. Currently, and as noted in former sections, most of FAO's relationships with civil society concern producers' organizations, without giving sufficient space to other actors of the food chain. Similarly, the Organization seems to work with foundations and industry organizations rather than individual companies, and more often with large transnational corporations from developed countries than with small and medium enterprises from the developing world. Some opportunities are thus missed and need to be explored, starting with a better identification of external partners, of what they can contribute to FAO's greater effectiveness, and, in the case of small and medium enterprises, recognizing their limited resources and the need to frame collaboration - in a first stage at least - within projects.

218. Strengthening FAO's partnerships with non-state actors also requires improving the Organization's **knowledge of external actors** - non-state actors in particular -, and to increase outreach by improving others' knowledge of what the Organization does and where its comparative advantages lie. It seems that, on the one hand, FAO has insufficiently incorporated the UN System's growing maturity in its understanding of the non-state actors (in particular of the private sector). On the other, research institutions, private sector organizations and NGO/CSOs alike have indicated they are not sufficiently familiar with what FAO has to offer. Indeed, while in many cases individual officers have been handling partnerships with commitment and skill, FAO as a whole does not project itself as an outward-looking and open organization vis-à-vis non-state partners.

219. There is need to instil and build a partnership culture among the staff, to enhance communications especially with non conventional partners, and, given the management-intensive nature of partnerships, also to build the necessary management skills. **Improving communication** would enable full interaction and mutual knowledge, streamlining respective roles and highlighting areas where further synergies could be realised. The initial lesson-drawing started with this evaluation should continue.

220. Possible roads include the establishment of task forces with representatives of these organizations, periodic meetings such as those held by the UNEP and the private sector, organizing training/information sessions with partners in order to enable participation in FAO activities, and continuing development and updating of pages dedicated to these actors on the FAO website. It is also recommended that partnerships, with the associated communication and management skills, be considered as part of staff competencies to be enhanced through capacity development activities.

221. From the information gathered throughout the evaluation, it appears there are fewer partnership initiatives at regional and country levels than at headquarters, due to recognised difficulties faced by country offices in initiating and working in partnership. Often, the FAO Representative does not have sufficient resources (staff and financial resources) available at country level to engage in a partnership beyond the project structure. Furthermore, in developing

countries, there is more limited access to partners, or at least to some categories of partners, in the field (e.g. research institutes which constitute our main partners). Finally, partnerships at country level beyond coordination is made more complex by the necessity to harmonize operational procedures. The latter is rendered particularly difficult when partners involved do not have similar institutional attributes.

222. Special attention should thus be given to **enhancing partnerships at regional and country level** and to devising procedures and support measures to facilitate FAO Regional and country representatives in that direction. This is particularly critical to enable FAO to heighten the impact of its work through partnerships targeting processes (UN programming and harmonization) and substance (inter-sectoral support to countries). Partnerships with civil society organizations merit further strengthening at national level both for policy dialogue and operational activities, as do partnerships with regional economic organizations to deal with growing regional cooperation and economic integration. As part of formulating a policy and strategy for the private sector, the opportunity for partnerships at the country level should be explored within an agri-food chain development approach to food security and poverty alleviation.

223. Finally, a number of positive lessons were drawn from the various partnerships reviewed. These should gear the corporate priorities and approach to partnerships. Partnerships are most successful when:

1. There is a **high political commitment** from Senior Management, reflected in their involvement in the collaboration and/or clear support for staff of the Organization to collaborate (e.g. the CPF).
2. FAO contributes with **substantial Regular Programme resources** and the work associated with the partnerships is largely embedded in the Regular Programme. Slower progress was found in partnerships where extra-budgetary financial resources were lacking (e.g. Land Degradation Assessment in the Drylands (LADA), Africa Stockpiles Programme, SARD-Initiative).
3. The partnership generates **an unusually creative product** which partners would not have been able to achieve individually and gain wide support for on their own (Codes of Conduct, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right-to-Food), or outcome would have been less comprehensive and the outreach smaller (Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger (FMFH)).
4. Partners have **clearly set the domain of action and the outputs and outcomes** to be reached through collaboration – i.e. are problem- and output-oriented rather than process-oriented, making the partnership more focused and cohesive (Codes of Conduct on Fisheries and Pesticides, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, Voluntary Right-to-Food Guidelines, FAOSTAT, Agricultural Market Access Database, Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger). The less cohesive partnerships have sought to address areas that have proved too broad (the Network in its attempt to support the implementation of WFS Plan of Action and rural development and food security programmes, or FIVIMS, which expanded its original mandate to develop and support common standards of practice for food information systems).
5. **Partners have equal power and resources, or inequality has been taken into account in the design of the partnership.** Cases of unequal power and resources have always ended with one agency capturing the ownership of the initiative/project. This was clearly the case with the World Bank in the Africa Stockpiles Programme. In some cases, the lead agency was FAO as budget holder with ultimate decision-making prerogatives on the use of funds, and this worked against full partnership (e.g. FIVIMS, the Network, FODEPAL). Through the years, official modalities have been devised to give more power and visibility to non-state actors' inputs to regulatory frameworks. In particular, the NGO/CSOs have been *de facto* complementary intellectual partners of FAO on plant genetic resources, pesticides and certainly on human rights approaches applied to food security.

6. **Partnership does not impinge on competitive partnerships.** As analysed earlier, some of the reasons for the limited achievements of the Network and the National Alliances against Hunger are linked to competition with other similar alliances at country level. Conversely, the Education for Rural People initiative grew in the institutional void of education policies for rural people, highlighted in the Dakar Conference in 2000 and acknowledged by governments, FAO and UNESCO. The SARD Initiative also hopes to avoid the risk of duplication by focusing on supporting existing partnerships and initiatives, fostering synergy and reducing competition rather than creating new competitive structures, because roughly one third of the 200 partnerships launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development relate to SARD and land issues.
7. **Partnerships have formal and informal structures of communication and decision-making at operational and political level.** The more solid partnerships are those which, in addition to intensive informal communications, have devised governing and decision-making structures, which reflect political backing and modalities for the operational level to work effectively. For the codes of conduct, international treaties and Right-to-Food, the governing structures offered by the FAO Committees and Commissions - with open dialogue - have also been judged as satisfactory by the civil society community.
8. **Partners have their own funding sources, or funding is consensually apportioned among partners.** In FMFH, individual partners contribute and look for funding towards a programme; in FAOSTAT and AMAD, each partner contributes with its own staff and expertise; in the Right-to-Food, funds were apportioned for CSO participation and given to CSOs to handle. This was not the case for FODEPAL, FIVIMS or the Network , where FAO was the primary contributor and budget holder. They have been perceived by partners as “FAO” initiatives and with lower interest.
9. **The partnership has an appropriate institutional home.** In the case of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, FAO, by supporting it without serving as the secretariat, was helpful in avoiding institutional capture. On the contrary, in some cases, the close association of the secretariat or of the facilitating staff with an organization/division was perceived as ‘institutional capture’, and the partnership became the organization/division’s activity (e.g. FIVIMS and the Network).
10. **Partnership facilitators have mediation, negotiation and communication skills.** In all the cases which appear to be functioning smoothly, part of the success was recognised as deriving from the positive personalities and attitudes of the facilitating staff. While these positive characteristics and inter-personal skills are part of individuals’ work behaviour, it is also true that partnerships entail know-how and skills that can be learnt.
11. **Partnerships have a manageable number of partners.** Building and maintaining partnerships is very management-intensive. In the cases of Codes of Conduct, International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources (ITPGR) and Right-to-Food, apart from the standardized formal process of the Committees and Commissions, the CSOs which have been very active and present throughout the process have been limited in number. The facilitating role of FAO has proved daunting with the large number of partners to be coordinated in FIVIMS (30 bilateral and UN organizations, 3 major NGOs), in United Nations System Network for Rural Development (20 UN organizations). The newly initiated partnerships of Education for Rural People and SARD-Initiative⁵⁰ also present this risk. Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger is working effectively with 10 partners.
12. **Partnership takes into account the different organizational cultures and values.** The partnerships conducted smoothly are those established among partners sharing the technical framing of issues (FAOSTAT and AMAD), or able to arrive, through

⁵⁰ A number of partners during the interviews complained about ‘not being informed’ about the events organized by the initiative.

negotiations and the important technical lobbying of non-state partners, to the same technical framing (ITPGR and Right-to-Food). Alternatively, the partners are culturally homogeneous (FMFH) or acknowledge their differences and consider them in the design and implementation of the partnership: in the case of the SARD-Initiative, room is given in the project design to indigenous knowledge. ERP makes room in its informal e-newsletter for inputs from NGOs, regardless of their technical quality. By contrast, the Network had a supply-driven webpage with one dominating organization. Part of the problems of FIVIMS has been dealing with poorly equipped statistics organizations and the difficulty in reconciling different information systems at the country level.

13. Partnerships deal with **controversial and complex issues** (i.e. without firm consensual knowledge as yet), **or with new interpretative frameworks**. In these cases, they appear essential and fruitful. This is the case of SARD, which, with its fragmented knowledge and multidisciplinary complexity, calls on the expertise, perspectives and demands of various stakeholders. It is also the case of Right-to-Food, with its ethical and human-rights dimension on which FAO has only limited expertise.