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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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**Evaluation of the FAO Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society
Organizations**

Management Response

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

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1. Management welcomes the *Evaluation of the FAO Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations* (the Strategy). In particular, Management is pleased to see that the Evaluation confirmed the validity of the Strategy as an overarching framework to guide FAO's engagement with civil society in the broad areas of food security and agricultural sector development, facilitating shared-value collaboration and demand-based partnerships based on equality, trust, inclusion and mutual benefits. Management concurs with the findings that the implementation of the Strategy has made a significant contribution to the participation of CSOs in global policy discussions and FAO's work at all levels, regional and national consultations and multi-stakeholder mechanisms and that partnerships at decentralized level have been guided by Members' priorities.
2. In spite of the important contributions to the field programme implementation found by the Evaluation, Management agrees with the finding that partnerships at decentralized levels need to increase their replicability, as well as the sustainability of the results achieved. Furthermore, Management agrees with the importance of enhancing integration of partnership development activities within CPFs and related work plans, as well as the necessary complementary work to be done with the rest of the UN family through UNSDCFs.
3. Likewise, the importance of more systematic engagement of CSOs in FAO's technical work is recognized, moving from an ad hoc/project-based engagement to a more programmatic approach with CSOs engaged more thoroughly in our technical work.
4. Management welcomes the finding that the implementation of the Strategy has resulted in significant capacity development among civil society organizations. This constitutes a strategic long-term benefit for CSOs which, in combination with the contribution to enable active participation in policy dialogues, is a significant contribution to the SDG agenda, and in particular to its underlying principle of *leaving no one behind*.
5. Management appreciates the extensive consultation process carried out to conduct the Evaluation which engaged managers, staff members and CSO partners, to capture their perspectives and recommendations, including through interviews with Regional Offices and selected country offices that brought concrete findings providing detailed information from the country level.
6. Management would have appreciated a cost/benefit analysis of the implementation of the Strategy by the Evaluation, in particular of the results obtained in relation to the amount of resources available. In addition, insights into the additional resources needed to implement the recommendations would have been welcome as, given their scope and nature, they cannot be fully implemented by the existing team (one part-time P4 and one P1).
7. Management would have also appreciated an analysis of the Organization's fundamental work with CSOs in emergencies, forestry and in other relevant sectors.
8. All four recommendations are accepted, and details on implementation plans are provided in the matrix below. Management will implement these recommendations, as well as future work on CSOs in alignment with FAO's new Strategy for Partnering with the Private Sector and building on opportunities created by the UN system-wide task force on partnerships.

Management response to the Evaluation of FAO Strategy for Partnership with the Civil Society Organizations Matrix

Evaluation recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Management plan			Date
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding Required (Y or N)
Recommendation 1. The Strategy should continue to serve as a framework for FAO's engagement with civil society in the broad areas of food security and agricultural sector development, facilitating shared-value collaboration and demand-based partnerships based on equality, trust, inclusion and mutual benefits.	Accepted	This recommendation will be implemented with shared responsibility between PSU and technical divisions/country offices.	PSU and Technical Divisions/ country offices		N
(i) In each technical area of work, PSP should guide the FAO technical divisions in undertaking an analysis of the opportunities and potential mutual benefits of bringing CSOs into their main work streams, focusing on partnerships that would mobilize an appropriate mix of knowledge, resources and assets to achieve organizational objectives and the 2030 Agenda.		i) PSU will reach out to technical divisions in order to map CSOs with relevant expertise and experience according to their programmatic priorities, to jointly explore further opportunities for partnerships.		i) continued	
(ii) Each programme country should undertake a mapping of relevant non-state actors and an analysis of where and how demand-based engagement with them could contribute to the objectives of the new UN Cooperation Framework and CPFs. As stipulated in the Strategy, PSP should enhance its efforts to assist the decentralized offices in conducting these mapping exercises.		ii) PSU will, in collaboration with regional offices, identify pilot countries to develop a programmatic contribution of CSOs to CPFs. A mapping methodology of CSOs contributions to SDGs will be thus developed, adjusted and transformed into guidelines to support country offices to develop their own mappings of CSOs contributions to CPFs and SDGs.		ii) end 2021	
Recommendation 2. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, FAO should consider expanding its engagement in effective multi-stakeholder partnership networks and mechanisms, moving beyond bilateral partnership agreements.	Accepted			End 2021	N

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(i) FAO should become more responsive to growing partnership opportunities, particularly when it comes to implementing the 2030 Agenda and promoting the establishment of multistakeholder initiatives aimed at the inclusive and effective engagement of civil society and other actors to achieve the SDGs.		i) PSU will support corporate engagement, including assisting technical streams in more systematic engagement of CSOs in their work - capitalizing on lessons learned from past experience , particularly on how they can be used to enhance policy dialogue and promote diversity of perspectives to support decision-making, thus contributing effectively to SDG implementation. Technical divisions should identify a partnership component in their plans and activities to also foster commitment and accountability in doing so.			i) N
(ii) FAO Country Offices should assess complementarities and synergies with other development actors' work in priority areas of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). Drawing on FAO's comparative advantages, Country Offices may choose to lead or participate in forming multi-stakeholder partnerships between CSOs, the UN agencies and other development actors in UNSDCF priority areas.		ii) PSU will strengthen the capacities of country offices to develop and sustain multi-stakeholder partnerships with the engagement of partnering CSOs (farming associations etc.) to actively promote FAO's partners' engagement in the UNSDCF process, including in collaboration with RBAs and others to have CSOs concerned in food and agriculture engaged in the UN national planning.			ii) N
Recommendation 3. FAO should review and develop a coherent approach to developing partnership arrangements, streamline its processes and revisit its instruments for engaging with CSOs to ensure that safeguards are commensurate with the level and scope of the engagement.	Accepted				N

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(i) In this regard, FAO could seize opportunities for innovation and for building on and scaling up best practices and existing models that may inform the creation of a one-stop shop official portal through which it can interact with (prospective) partners.		<p>i) PSU is evaluating different existing portals at the UN level and will consider the best option for the needs of the Organization. PSU and OER, are exploring the possibility to join UN Partner Portal (UNPP) (www.unpartnerportal.org) developed and managed by the International Computing Center (UN ICC). It is an online platform for civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage with the UN agencies on partnership opportunities and to enhance collaboration between the UN and partners. It supports the partnership selection process and simplifies the UN processes for CSO partnership.</p> <p>Additionally PSU will document best practices and innovations from CSO partners in order to share their knowledge among technical units and decentralized offices</p>	i) PSU		i) N
(ii) The newly established PSDU should be adequately organized and equipped to manage potential demand and exercise its role in the most objective and effective way possible.		<p>ii) the Due Diligence unit (PSDU) was moved to the newly formed PSS division in order to avoid any potential conflict of interest (Audit of Management of Partnerships with Non-State actors, March 2019, AUD0319). In this new structure, it will benefit from the oversight and guidance of a P5 and a D1. The unit is adequately resourced with a P3, a P2 and non-staff personnel.</p>	ii) PSS		ii) N
(iii) FAO could explore the circumstances under which a letter of agreement, and the use of the letter-of-agreement accountability framework alone, is deemed sufficient to achieve the FAO's objectives without necessitating additional or		<p>iii) PSU will identify a set of existing partnerships using LoAs in order to identify, from a partnership perspective, the main challenges brought by the LOA modality. PSU will systematize and analyze this information and determine whether adjustments or new instruments are needed in</p>	iii) PSU		iii) N

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different partnership arrangements, such as those under the OPIM.		<p>order to ensure safeguards commensurate with the level and scope of each engagement.</p> <p>FAO notes that the LOA is not a partnership tool but, rather, a procurement instrument which often gives rise to difficulties in the use of the standard instruments for partnership purposes.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 4. FAO should improve its assessment of the value and impact of ongoing and past partnerships and draw on identified best practices and lessons learned to develop updated guidance for initiating effective collaboration approaches and partnership initiatives, making any necessary updates to Strategy implementation.</p> <p>(i) In line with the originally proposed arrangements for Strategy implementation, PSU should significantly strengthen its partnership monitoring system, ensure timely updates of the partnerships database and develop tools to measure partnerships' effectiveness.</p> <p>(ii) In addition to strengthening its monitoring system, PSU should assess the impact and benefits of partnerships and the challenges faced for accountability and learning purposes. The resulting information should be included in guidance materials and knowledge products, as well as in regular reporting to the FAO Programme Committee and other reporting mechanisms, such as the Programme Implementation Report, Mid-Term Reviews and Resources Partnership Impact reports.</p>	Accepted	<p>In line with the audit recommendation (AUD0319), PSU continues its efforts to strengthen its monitoring system and effectively assess the impact, benefits, and challenges of partnerships.</p> <p>As for the partnerships database, PSU will increase its visibility and raise awareness among Technical Unit Directors on how it can be accessed and consulted, and on the need to ensure timely updates.</p> <p>The annual partnership monitoring exercise will be strengthened as a tool to measure partnerships' effectiveness. Quality assurance and follow-up actions will be taken by the monitoring focal points, in order to ensure completeness of the survey and timely collection of the progress made. This resulting information will be included in the regular reporting to the FAO Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees and other reporting mechanisms.</p> <p>Moreover, PSU will capitalize lessons learned and best practices that can be used to develop guidance materials and knowledge products for effective collaboration.</p>	PSU	End 2021	<p>i) Y</p> <p>i) N</p>