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Продовольственная и  
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Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة  
الغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

# PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

## Hundred and Twenty-second Session

Rome, 6-10 November 2017

**Follow-up report to the Evaluation of FAO's contribution on knowledge on food and agriculture (cf. PC 118/2; PC 118/2 Sup.1)**

### Guidance sought by the Programme Committee

The Programme Committee may wish to note progress in implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Management.

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1. Management welcomes the opportunity to provide information on the progress made during 2016-17 in implementing the actions agreed in the Management Response to the *Evaluation of FAO's contribution on knowledge on food and agriculture*, which was considered by the Programme Committee in November 2015.<sup>1</sup>

2. In line with FAO's policy on evaluations, this report provides an update on the implementation of the actions set out in the Management Response. Upon request by the Office of Evaluation (OED), it contains a Management Action Record Scoring (MAR Score) on a six-point scale, in which FAO Management self-assessed the level of adoption and implementation of recommendations.

*Overall progress in the implementation of all accepted recommendations*

3. FAO Management welcomed the findings and recommendations of the Evaluation. The Evaluation's analysis, findings and recommendations have supported FAO in sharpening its approach towards knowledge management, ensuring a more effective use of its knowledge products and services across the Organization, its Members and other constituencies.

4. The Evaluation highlighted that "FAO's knowledge products and services (publications, databases, networks and learning resources) are core elements to fulfil the Organization's mandate to collect, analyze, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture." It assessed the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of FAO's knowledge products and services, including quality assurance and dissemination processes. Drawing from the findings of the assessment, two recommendations were presented, both of which were accepted by the Organization. Progress on implementing the recommendations is reported below.

5. **Recommendation 1** requested FAO to "*pay greater attention to users' and learners' needs, as well as the potential for improving ease of use and expanding the resources 'influence to a broader audience.'*" Adequate progress has been made on this recommendation.

6. With an ever increasing amount of publications produced every year,<sup>2</sup> the Organization took concrete action by promulgating, in June 2017, a new *Corporate Publishing Strategy*.<sup>3</sup> The strategy aims at streamlining FAO's publication process and improving effectiveness of its publications to achieve FAO's Strategic Objectives through the timely production and dissemination of high-quality publications to cater to the evolving needs of the target audiences. Key evaluation criteria for publications include: quality and technical soundness, target audience (technical, policy, general); standardization, dissemination; engagement, branding, impact and access. A peer review process is being introduced for all major flagship publications. The new Strategy is being applied to all FAO publications.

7. With regards to better identify users and learners needs, a bottom-up work the planning process for 2018-19 has focused on all country and regional offices and the related audiences. This constitutes a major step forward on ensuring that FAO's knowledge products are tailored to the country and regional needs and specificities, while contributing to achieving FAO's Strategic Objectives.

8. FAO also introduced an online-based users' feedback mechanism for major publications, especially flagship publications. In 2018, efforts will be made on introducing systematic monitoring and assessment of users' needs, especially for global public goods.

9. The Evaluation also suggested strengthening of the role of the Chief Statistician to enable effective application of the Statistics Quality Assurance Framework (SQAF).<sup>4</sup> The 155<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council in December 2016<sup>5</sup> approved FAO's proposal for separating the functions of the Director of the Statistics Division from the functions of Chief Statistician. This has allowed the latter to better

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<sup>1</sup> PC 118/2; PC 118/2 Sup.1

<sup>2</sup> In 2016 alone, FAO produced a total 1568 publications, including 658 books and 910 brochures. It had 1.24 million downloads per year for flagships and almost 9 million user visits on FAO.org.

<sup>3</sup> FAO, June 2017. Publishing at FAO – Strategy and Guidance

<sup>4</sup> FAO. 2014. The FAO Statistics Quality Assurance Framework. Rome

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ms339e.pdf>

focus on coordinating of the development and implementation of statistical standards and methodologies across the Organization and ensuring the best quality of FAO statistical processes, including those related to the 21 SDG indicators under FAO custodianship.

10. With regards to improving users' access and online services, the Organization through its Information Technology Division (CIO) made progress on:

- a) availability of the FAO Web site through migrating progressively its Data Center to a cloud provider with 99.99% availability worldwide. At the same time, the Web site architecture is being restructured to improve availability and response times;
- b) improving access channels to the Web site through traditional Web access, mobile access and interoperability mechanisms (Web services) where possible; and
- c) improving ease of searching and visualization through the use of a tool that will improve the visualization, search and interaction online. This will also improve the interaction with those users who access FAO documents and data.

11. **Recommendation 2** requested FAO to “continue to strengthen the mechanism and measures in place to ensure technical excellence of its knowledge products and services.” Adequate progress has been made on this recommendation.

12. The recent Independent Assessment of FAO's Technical Capacity<sup>6</sup> found that in 2016 alone 106 standard setting instruments were created or updated. The assessment showed that FAO has broadly improved its delivery of the key products and services that drive its normative work between 2012 and 2016. Ensuring the excellence of all knowledge products and services has however proven challenging because of the sheer number and diverse variety of these knowledge products and services. A step-by step approach is being followed to evaluate those knowledge products and services, involving FAOs technical networks as a valuable mechanism to review by discipline; cross-cutting theme and location. During 2018, the findings will be consolidated into a single corporate quality assurance mechanism, which will also strengthen the Corporate Publications Strategy.

13. With regards to quality assurance of databases, the Statistics Quality Assurance Framework (SQAF) aims at ensuring the production and dissemination of high-quality statistics to external and internal users. The SQAF comprises three components: (i) the definition of quality of statistics; (ii) a set of principles and guidelines for FAO statistical products and for an enabling institutional environment; and (iii) a mechanism for ensuring the compliance of FAO statistical processes to the SQAF itself. In 2016 a full assessment of FAO statistical processes was conducted for the first time through the Quality Assurance and Planning Survey (QAPS). The survey revealed a number of weaknesses and deficiencies in FAO data collection and dissemination activities, which are being addressed by the Office of the Chief Statistician, in collaboration with technical units and the Interdepartmental Working Group on Statistics.

14. Progress in the implementation of the recommendations is provided in the Matrix.

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<sup>6</sup> C 2017/26; C 2017/26 Sup.1

Accepted Evaluation recommendations (a)	Action agreed in the Management Response (b)	Description of actions actually taken, or reasons for actions not taken (c)	MAR score <sup>7</sup> (d)	Impact of, or changes resulting from taken actions (e)
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> FAO could pay greater attention to users' and learners' needs, as well as the potential for improving ease of use and expanding the resources' influence to a broader audience.</p>	<p>A Working Group will be established with the participation of CIO, OCC, Chief Statistician and others to look at alternative models including the application of new search engine technologies.</p> <p>The new business model will facilitate greater access to and findability of FAO's knowledge products and services and allow for better gathering of information about users' and learners' needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release of FAO Corporate Publishing Strategy in June 2017.</li> <li>• Reviewed bottom-up work planning process for 2018-2019.</li>   <li>• An online-based users' feedback mechanism for publications implemented in the third quarter 2017.</li> <li>• Improved user's access and online services (CIO).</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamlined publication process with improved effectiveness and quality of FAO's publications.</li> <li>• Increase number of downloads across user spectrum, subject matter and in all FAO official languages.</li>   <li>• Unique branding of FAO publications and bringing them to regional and country level (example: Regional Panoramas on food security and nutrition).</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Management Action Record Scoring (MAR Score)

**1 - None:** no action was taken to implement the recommendation; **2 - Poor:** plan and actions for implementation of the recommendation are at a very preliminary stage; **3 - Inadequate:** implementation of the recommendation is uneven and partial; **4 - Adequate:** implementation of the recommendation has progressed; there is no evidence yet of its results on the intended target; **5 - Good:** the recommendation has been fully implemented and there is some initial evidence of its impact on the intended target; **6 – Excellent:** there is solid evidence that the recommendation has had a positive impact on its intended target

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2018, FAO will further work on improving the visualization, search and interaction online and develop a Digital Marketing Strategy.</li> <li>In 2018, FAO will expand the use of cybermetric analysis to trace types of organizations that are citing documents, their geographic distribution and how they are referencing FAO knowledge products.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased availability of FAO's Web site.</li> <li>Systematic collection of information on the influence and results achieved.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> FAO should continue to strengthen the mechanisms and measures in place to ensure technical excellence of its knowledge products and services.</p>	<p>Existing guidelines and quality assurance mechanisms will be reviewed.</p> <p>A corporate quality assurance mechanism to be applied to all knowledge products and services across units and locations will be developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Statistics/Data/Databases:</b> First full assessment of FAO statistical activities/processes through the Quality Assurance and Planning Survey (QAPS). Main deficiencies in FAO data collection and dissemination activities identified and addressed through the Interdepartmental Working Group on Statistics and the new corporate Statistical Working System that is being adopted by a growing number of statistical units.</li> <li><b>Quality Assurance mechanisms:</b> A step-by step approach is being followed to evaluate those knowledge products and services, involving FAOs technical networks as a valuable mechanism to review</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased efficiency of data collection activities and quality of the statistics disseminated.</li> </ul>

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