



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

C2021/4

42nd Session of the Conference



Programme Evaluation Report 2021

OFFICE OF EVALUATION



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

CONFERENCE

Forty-second Session

2021

Programme Evaluation Report (PER)

Executive Summary

The Programme Evaluation Report provides some of the highlights which emerged from the evaluations conducted by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) during the period 2019–2020.

Suggested action by the Conference

The Conference:

- welcomed the Programme Evaluation Report 2021, including the main findings emerging from the thematic, country, project and programme, and resilience and emergency evaluations completed during the period 2019-20.

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

Masahiro Igarashi
Director, Office of Evaluation
Tel: +39 06570 53903
Email: OED-Director@fao.org

Contents

Introduction	3
1. Evaluating FAO's contributions to the SDGs	4
1.1 Hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition	4
1.2 Sustainable agriculture, environment and climate action	5
1.3 Supporting people in crisis settings.....	6
1.4 Leaving no one behind	7
1.5 Enabling factors	9
2. Promoting the utility of the evaluation function	11
2.1 Remaining responsive to the evolving context	11
2.2 Safeguarding relevance and quality.....	12
2.3 Enhancing learning and evaluation culture at regional and country level.....	13
2.4 Supporting FAO in building an evidence-based Strategic Framework	14
3. Evaluating FAO's work.....	15
3.1 Evaluations in the 2019–2020 biennium.....	15
References.....	18

Figures and tables

Figure 1: Summary of evaluation data	3
Figure 2: Geographical distribution of country programme evaluations	16
Figure 3: Geographical distribution of project and programme evaluations (2019-2020)	17
Table 1: Number of evaluations by region and evaluation type (2019–2020).....	15
Table 2: Evaluation cost by type.....	15

Introduction

1. This Programme Evaluation Report (PER) outlines some of the highlights of the 95 evaluations conducted by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) in the period 2019–2020. These include evaluations of Country Programmes and projects, thematic strategies, resilience and emergency evaluations, FAO's statistical work and the strategic results framework, as well as the first evaluations in a series on FAO's contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. The rapidly evolving international context and changes within the Organization placed new demands on OED, which devised an array of innovative evaluative products and services to support FAO Management and the new leadership OED focused on adapting its practices to address the new needs, chiefly United Nations development system (UNDS) reform and the COVID-19 pandemic, while taking evaluations in new directions to promote their utility and learning.

Figure 1: Summary of evaluation data



1. Evaluating FAO's contributions to the SDGs

1.1 Hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition

3. The evaluations conducted during the biennium, such as the evaluation of FAO's contributions to Sustainable Development Goal 2 – "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture", showed FAO to be well positioned globally and committed to eradicating hunger and ensuring nutritious food for all (FAO, 2020a). SDG2 is at the core of FAO's mandate, as also exemplified by the fact that nine of the 21 SDG indicators for which the Organization is custodian agency are under SDG2. FAO provides coherent, credible data on food and nutrition security and compiles SDG2 indicators, notably through the Organization's Global Information and Early Warning System and the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)* report, which it publishes together with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization (FAO et al., 2020).
4. The evaluations concluded that FAO widely communicated its role in support of SDG achievement, also equipping its staff to do so. It took a highly collaborative approach to the United Nations development system (UNDS) reform process, which is strongly connected to the SDGs and seen as an opportunity to boost the decision-making power and financial autonomy of FAO Country Offices. It was noted that Country Offices often had limited programmatic footprint, operating capacity and private-sector links. FAO could boost its profile and position by improving in these areas, supporting national development initiatives and investments, bolstering the policy environment and strengthening the state-actor capacity to use their resources effectively.
5. FAO was deemed overly reliant on pilot projects, lacking the partnerships and resource mobilization for upscaling. Supporting visible, demand-driven national initiatives could foster actions at scale. For instance, through the Investment Centre, FAO assisted Members in mobilizing resources for investment in rural development, agriculture, food systems and related fields. It also played a major role in areas such as nutrition education (food-based dietary guidelines and school canteens), investment in climate resilience, extension systems and managing agricultural pests and diseases. FAO could expand its work on agricultural biodiversity, as this is key to preventing the spread of pathogens that harm environmental, food and nutrition security. It could also better use markets to valorize sustainable agricultural practices and products.
6. FAO has been broadening the scope and diversity of its products, albeit slowly, and adopting more holistic methodologies, such as the food-systems approach. It is, thus, drawing on the programmatic approach of the new global development framework, with its emphasis on SDG synergies and trade-offs. Still, progress on the transition to sustainable agriculture in 2019–2020 was limited to a few countries. Education systems, including vocational training and extension systems, are essential to the transition to sustainable agriculture. Greater use of digital innovation, information systems and monitoring systems would enhance learning in and from the field and internal knowledge exchange.

7. The Strategic Framework 2022-31 presents a major opportunity for the Organization to align with the SDGs, to push for more consistent implementation of the key principles of the 2030 Agenda and to define a harmonized monitoring system for both voluntary and assessed contributions.

Recent update: Following the recommendations of the Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition (FAO, 2019a), FAO submitted to the Council an updated Draft Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition (FAO, 2020g), which it endorsed in November 2020. FAO has also created an SDG unit, in line with the recommendations of Phase 1 of the SDG2 evaluation.

1.2 Sustainable agriculture, environment and climate action

8. Almost 80 percent of the projects evaluated in 2019–2020 contributed directly to environmental and climate change-related targets, with more than 60 percent primarily targeting SDG15 (life on land). The project evaluations addressed a wide array of topics, from aspects of forest ecosystem services, including monitoring and assessment and desertification, to soil and water biodiversity, the disposal of obsolete pesticides, and land and water management.
9. FAO's ability to access Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding underpinned its role as a facilitator of cross-sectoral policy discussion and enabled it to design and implement projects in the fields of sustainable production, climate change and environmental protection. A portion of FAO-GEF projects went specifically to funding countries' contributions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and mitigation activities under the Paris Agreement, such as the GEF's Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency and the GEF-FAO Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use project.
10. FAO also mobilized significant funds for climate action through the Green Climate Fund and was accredited to the Adaptation Fund. Two recently completed SDG evaluations (on SDG2 and SDG13) highlighted how most FAO projects targeting one SDG had a direct effect on other SDGs, especially where targets were cross-sectoral (FAO, 2020a; forthcoming).
11. OED found that FAO had created tools, databases, guidance and learning materials to enhance national capacity to design, implement and report actions in line with global climate agreements, as well as to access funding. FAO was pivotal in securing the inclusion of agriculture in global negotiations on climate change and linking agriculture to Nationally Determined Contributions.
12. FAO knowledge products are used in UNFCCC negotiation processes, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and international policy dialogue. They have influenced national policy on agriculture, food, fisheries and aquaculture and encouraged the inclusion of sustainability criteria in new regulations and legislation. FAO's products have also influenced national policy frameworks on agriculture, food and fisheries and aquaculture, encouraging the inclusion of sustainability criteria (Target 13.2.1, adaptation capacity, plans and strategies).

13. Among the most significant tools FAO developed in 2019–2020 were those for remote sensing. The free, open-source Open Foris software toolset, its System for Earth Observation Data Access, Processing and Analysis for Land Monitoring (SEPAL) and its Collect/Collect Earth tools are major achievements that contribute directly to SDG13 and the Paris Agreement.
14. UN REDD/REDD+ was deemed another successful example of FAO's contribution to climate action, underscoring its efforts to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by preventing deforestation and forest degradation and promoting the use of low-emission approaches in agriculture and livestock.
15. To improve its contribution to climate action, evaluations observed that FAO could do more on governance in relation to climate change, internal coordination, mainstreaming climate change, monitoring and reporting, outreach and partnerships (FAO, forthcoming).

1.3 Supporting people in crisis settings

16. The evaluation of FAO's contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus was a significant addition to FAO's efforts to develop an effective and innovative Strategic Framework, centred on the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda and "leaving no one behind" and analysing FAO's contributions to SDG 16 (FAO, forthcoming). The evaluation drew on the vision of the first session of the FAO Conference that "the Food and Agriculture Organization is born out of the need for peace as well as the need for freedom from want. The two are interdependent. Progress towards freedom from want is essential to lasting peace."¹
17. The HDP nexus is not a new area of work for FAO, nor a particular type of programme, but a mindset, a systemic way of thinking and new way of working. Its key feature is its joined-up, multi-partner, flexible and adaptive programming across the three HDP pillars, anchored in contextual analysis and evidence. It is people-centred and inclusive. For HDP approaches to be effective, they need innovative, transformational and principled leadership that can foster dialogue across disciplines, sectors and pillars of the aid architecture and create a vision that draws on the technical expertise and mandates of agencies such as FAO to promote discussion, collaboration and sustainable longer-term results. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee Recommendation on the HDP nexus is one of the key texts spelling out this approach (OECD, 2019); the HDP nexus evaluation recommends that FAO become a signatory (FAO, forthcoming).
18. The evaluation recognized that FAO's work to prioritize and implement a HDP approach was rooted in its country-level operations. It assembled a number of country examples to inform the narrative. Still, it found FAO's internal understanding of the HDP nexus, as well as programmatic coherence and consistency among teams and countries, to be fragmented. For example, there was little consistency in the scale of FAO's humanitarian offering or its engagement in conflict situations. The overarching message was that FAO should invest in a major corporate effort to learn from its years of experience and successes, to mainstream and incorporate HDP nexus ways of working into its organizational DNA. It should make deliberate and informed use of approaches and practices, such as technical diplomacy, information

¹ Vision of the FAO Founders: <http://www.fao.org/3/j6285e/j6285e03.htm>

systems and contextual analysis, to shape conflict-sensitive programming, rights-based frameworks and people-centred approaches to achieve inclusive and peace-sustaining results.

19. FAO should also boost its footprint in and contributions to coordinative and multi-partner forums and policy dialogue at country, regional and global level. It has comparative advantages in its technical expertise and knowledge, but should ensure that this is sustained by skilled, well-informed and well-supported leadership at all levels and by an enabling organizational system and culture, so that it can deliver innovative and long-lasting results on peace to its Members, whether it be in crisis or development settings (FAO, forthcoming).

1.4 Leaving no one behind

20. FAO has historically assisted in combating inequalities between countries and territories, but OED evaluations found that its work to support the most vulnerable groups required improvement. In addition to not being fully integrated into the Strategic Framework (an omission that the Strategic Framework 2022-31 aims to correct), the principle had not been properly defined within FAO or systematically mainstreamed into its programmes, projects or systems. Therefore, there was little understanding of what it entailed for the Organization and limited accountability when it came to implementation.
21. Notwithstanding these challenges, FAO made some notable contributions to “leaving no one behind” during the biennium. Support for legal and policy processes was found to be more inclusive than mere technical interventions, partly because they adopted a human rights-based approach and partly because most policies and laws apply to everyone. FAO also adhered to this principle when exercising its convening power. The Organization also made some progress on gender equality, far outpacing its work with other marginalized groups.
22. Technical interventions that mainstreamed this principle were often pilot projects and/or projects specifically designed to support a certain marginalized group. However, even when interventions produced methods and good practices to promote social and/or economic inclusion in a variety of technical areas, they were rarely replicated. Examples of replicable methodologies included Dimitra Clubs, Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment and Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools.
23. FAO’s participatory approaches originate from the development side of its work and have been picked up, to some extent, in its humanitarian work and programming in fragile states, yielding positive results. They are highly relevant to HDP nexus ways of working in terms of understanding, systemically, the needs and rights of local people and communities and the context in which they are living. However, such participatory approaches tend to be fragmented and small scale. If they were to be promoted consistently and scaled up and integrated into broader interventions, they could play a major role in operationalizing the HDP nexus at programming level, lending support to the conflict and peace component. Local people and actors would need to be engaged in both the design and implementation. It would also require a more systemic and strategic targeting approach that took the whole community into account and was no longer driven by narrow project objectives, but by wider community dynamics. This would be critical to avoiding narrow targeting criteria that, if poorly thought through, could fuel tension in and between communities.

Gender

24. The number of projects and programmes mainstreaming gender continued to rise in 2019–2020 thanks to the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and efforts to implement it (FAO, 2013).² Evaluations found that FAO had become more gender aware thanks to a number of measures, including the introduction of gender markers, resulting in more gender-responsive projects across FAO.
25. FAO's greatest contributions to gender equality during the biennium were those at the policy and strategy levels. Evaluations found interventions to support women as producers and entrepreneurs, rather than just mothers and caretakers, had increased significantly over the years, yet very few had addressed the structural barriers to gender equality. Still, FAO's strengthening of its commitment to gender equality shows that it is possible to make improvements in a relatively short time when it holds itself to account, though it requires the joint political and financial will of FAO and its Members.
26. HDP nexus programming could play a transformational role in delivering gender equality and empowerment, especially if it takes a sufficiently long-term perspective. FAO's record in this regard was mixed, according to evaluations in 2019–2020. While some short-term Peace Building Fund projects targeted women, in particular, in a bid to strengthen their peacebuilding role, FAO's guidance materials on conflict analysis tended to approach gender through the lens of gender-based violence and failed to promote the role of women as active agents of peace. In turn, FAO's country gender assessments were mostly conflict-blind. FAO has a rich seam of guidance materials and tools on integrating gender through rights-based approaches, such as the "voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security" (VGGTs) (FAO, 2012) and the land and gender portal, on which it could draw to mainstream a gender and peace dimension into its programmes. Other aspects of intersectionality, such as age, must be better covered. Such should be addressed in FAO's forthcoming Protection Policy.

Recent update: As recommended by the Evaluation of FAO's Work on Gender (FAO, 2019b), FAO updated its Policy on Gender Equality (FAO, 2020c) and is developing an Action Plan with short- to medium-term gender-equality targets to ensure adequate operationalization and monitoring of progress towards high-level policy objectives.

Marginalized populations and inclusivity

27. Youth has been increasingly integrated into FAO interventions, mainly through agribusiness, trade, climate change and peacebuilding activities, but attracting young people to agriculture remains a challenge. The Rural Youth Action Plan, endorsed by the Committee on Agriculture in October 2020, should reinforce FAO's commitment to empowering them (FAO, 2020d).

² Such as the inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting theme in the Strategic Framework, the appointment of regional gender officers and focal points, the development of corporate gender-related indicators to monitor performance on gender and the revision of the policy to build on the SDGs and the principle of "leaving no one behind".

28. Though not traditional beneficiaries of FAO's work, OED evaluations found that children had benefited from school feeding programmes, nutritional education and interventions to improve livelihoods. FAO's evaluated technical interventions during the biennium paid little heed to child labour, however, despite most child labour being found in agriculture (ILO, 2017).
29. Moreover, while FAO recognizes that indigenous and tribal peoples are often among the poorest of the poor, its assistance to these groups remains inadequate. These groups have tended to benefit solely from interventions on agroecology and the conservation of genetic resources. The team responsible for implementing the FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (FAO, 2015) was deemed to lack visibility and resources.
30. FAO's portfolio on forced migration increased to USD 619 million in 2020. Despite many good practices, however, FAO failed to address migrants, refugees and internally displaced people in a systematic way. The lack of a corporate strategy or vision was found to have hindered the effectiveness of interventions targeting these groups.
31. Persons with disabilities were also seldom considered in FAO's programmes and projects, or in high-level commitments.³

Resilience and livelihoods

32. Evaluations concluded that resilience and livelihoods programmes needed to better define and develop people-centred approaches, spelling out the rationale behind beneficiary targeting and selection. FAO targeting is largely based on vulnerability criteria, insufficiently supporting households beyond their immediate needs.
33. Evaluation evidence showed targeting to be more effective when it was comprehensive and when activities were differentiated by household profile. Narrow targeting can fuel tensions within and between communities. Evaluations also confirmed that results were more sustainable when groups were included in the targeting of activities and decision-making.

1.5 Enabling factors

Statistics

34. FAO's statistical work remained highly relevant to Members, though more needs to be done to optimize statistical quality. While progress was made on certain aspects, the statistics produced and disseminated were only partly compliant with FAO's Statistics Quality Assurance Framework. The insufficient harmonization of procedures, IT support and infrastructure limited FAO's progress towards a more coherent and modern statistical system.
35. The Organization's coordinative and methodological work on the SDGs raised its profile in the international community, though it was unable to meet national demand for capacity development, so was not able to fully commit to tackling inequalities between and within countries and territories. Linking FAO's methodological and capacity-development work on

³ Such as priority-setting in the context of FAO Regional Conferences. The only example OED found referred to children with disabilities as beneficiaries of a school feeding programme.

implementing SDG indicators with its national statistical capacity-development activities is crucial to creating long-term statistical capacity and enforcing policy alignment.

36. FAO incorporated sex disaggregation into all of its statistical work, though not systematically. As a custodian of SDG5 indicators, it included sex-disaggregated data in some of its databases and interventions, but far less data on other marginalized groups. Most interventions focused on data generation and collection, ignoring the gap between evidence and policymaking.
37. To improve its statistical work and become world leader in agricultural statistics, FAO needs to improve its internal statistical governance to form a solid basis for well-coordinated, coherent statistical work. It should use regional knowledge to shape methodologies and standards. Furthermore, FAO's statistical resources are not commensurate with the objectives of the statistical workplan, and its dependence on extrabudgetary resources limits its capacity to support core statistical activities. FAO should also accelerate actions to improve the quality of its data and IT infrastructure support and put in place an integrated statistical quality management system to ensure full adherence with all internationally accepted statistical standards and norms.

Partnerships

38. The evaluations of FAO's Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations and its Private Sector Partnership Strategy (FAO, 2020e; 2019c) highlighted the central role FAO has played in forging partnerships with diverse development actors on issues of sustainable agriculture and climate change adaptation. FAO facilitated the establishment of inclusive, voluntary and action-oriented multi-stakeholder platforms, such as the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture, and transformational partnerships to encourage better integration of the three pillars of climate-smart agriculture: productivity, adaptation and mitigation. FAO's participation in the GEF Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscape initiative showed the potential of establishing partnerships, platforms and dialogues to promote climate-smart best practices in key rice-growing countries.
39. Following up on the 2019 private-sector partnership evaluation, FAO submitted a new Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021–2025 to the Council in November 2020 (FAO, 2020f). In line with another evaluation recommendation, it committed to establishing a web-based private-sector partner portal, CONNECT, for it to interact with prospective and current partners.

Recent update: The FAO Council approved the new Strategy in December 2020. FAO considers the private sector to be a key ally in the fight against hunger and malnutrition and in achieving the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of partnerships and leveraging knowledge and innovation in a time of limited resources.

2. Promoting the utility of the evaluation function

2.1 Remaining responsive to the evolving context

40. The rapidly evolving international context and changes within the Organization placed new demands on OED during the biennium. In line with its mission to gather knowledge for analysis to inform strategic and programmatic decision-making, OED made every effort to deliver relevant and timely inputs at global, regional and country level, and continues to do so.

United Nations development system reform

41. The repositioned country-level approach of the UNDS and FAO's programmatic framework and work cycle have prompted OED to rethink its contribution to organizational accountability and learning and to develop a new approach to country programme evaluations.
42. The introduction of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (CFs) as part of UNDS reform logically calls for inter-agency rather than single-agency evaluations as a way of supporting inclusive and holistic learning on programme performance by country partners. In concrete terms, independent CF evaluations should occur in the penultimate year of the CF period. The system also encourages joint evaluations to strengthen consistency among programmes. The long-term vision promoted by the United Nations Secretary-General sees decentralized evaluation functions supporting sectoral assessments of interventions, lowering transaction costs. A draft United Nations System-Wide Evaluation Policy plans to establish regional-level collaborative platforms to promote joint and system-wide evaluation activities and generate evaluative knowledge relevant to the region (UNEG, 2017).

Boosting national evaluation capacity

43. The United Nations General Assembly⁴ invited United Nations agencies to bolster country-level capacity to assess the outcome of national policies and programmes, particularly within the 2030 horizon, prompting OED to intensify its efforts in this regard.
44. Consequently, OED has renewed its support for *EvalForward*, the Community of Practice on Evaluation for Agriculture, Food Security and Rural Development,⁵ together with the independent Offices of Evaluation of IFAD and WFP. Founded in 2018 and offering services in English, French and Spanish, *EvalForward* has become a recognized channel for developing evaluation culture and capacity among developing-country practitioners. Its membership of more than 900 evaluators, decision makers and academics in 103 countries hails mainly from Africa (41 percent), Europe (24 percent) and Asia (13 percent). A survey conducted in mid-2020 showed keen interest in the opportunities to improve practices presented by the group's knowledge exchanges and network building. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the group's virtual exchange platform is a valued go-to resource, enabling live interaction through regular webinars, as well as a new series of "Eval talks" with partners and experts from around the world.

⁴ United Nations General Assembly (2014)

⁵ <https://www.evalforward.org/>

45. OED has also continued to press for the engagement of national experts to conduct its evaluative work at country level. Such an approach has mutual benefits. For OED, it deepens the contextual anchoring of evaluation analyses and minimizes travel costs and carbon footprint. For national evaluators, it offers international exposure. OED has been establishing links with relevant national research and training institutions to facilitate collaborations with experts from the Global South.

2.2 Safeguarding relevance and quality

46. OED strives to reflect on and adapt its practices and to learn from peers, to continue making highly relevant, useful and quality contributions to FAO. During the COVID-19 crisis, this has spurred real-time adjustments and exchanges with the international evaluation community.

Adapting to COVID-19

47. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded the need to adapt standard practices so that OED could continue to make valuable contributions to inform and improve FAO's interventions. Evaluators had to reinvent ways of observing the results, substantiating the evidence and conducting the stakeholder exchanges that are core to its field missions. They also had to work around the limited availability of programme stakeholders overwhelmed with new, urgent priorities.
48. OED addressed the challenges of this unprecedented situation by rethinking how it should or could engage in an evaluation, creating a series of criteria to this end.⁶ Guided by keen attention to utility, evaluation personnel adapted processes, engagement methods and approaches, developing new ways of connecting with stakeholders and collecting information from a distance over longer periods. Some evaluations shifted focus as programmes reoriented to emergency response, while most reconsidered ways to discuss results and the way forward with stakeholders, to maximize the utility of the evaluation, despite their remoteness.

Working within the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

49. As has been its practice for more than 30 years, OED continued to play an active role in the international community of professional evaluators in 2019–2020. This included working with UNEG⁷ to shore up the evaluation functions of the United Nations system. With the Director of OED elected Chair of UNEG in 2020 and with OED personnel participating in various working groups, this collaborative effort helped to enhance the quality and utility of FAO evaluations, keeping evaluators up to date with state-of-the-art evaluation methods and approaches.
50. OED made particularly salient contributions through its work to improve evaluation methods, promote the use of evaluation for programme improvement and advance the peer-review practice. Such work with evaluation peers globally is fundamental to furthering the positive impact of evaluation on global development programmes and policies and has spawned a community of exchange that has proved very helpful in adapting to the COVID-19 situation.

⁶ FAO (2020h)

⁷ www.uneval.org

2.3 Enhancing learning and evaluation culture at regional and country level

51. In the interest of nurturing an evaluation function that can enhance its contributions to FAO and its Members, OED has taken evaluation in new directions with a view to increasing the utility of and learning from evaluations.

Efforts to enhance the use of evaluation at regional level

52. Governance arrangements for OED evaluations tend to confine detailed discussion of thematic and corporate evaluations to the Programme Committee. Many Members are not overly familiar with OED evaluations or have the opportunity to interact with OED.
53. To enhance the use of and learning from evaluations, at the behest of the 125th Programme Committee (FAO, 2018), OED produced five regional syntheses of evaluations conducted between 2014 and 2019. The regional syntheses were an opportunity for OED to systematically consolidate the many evaluations conducted during the period, offering tailored products that were potentially more useful to FAO Members than a single synthesis at global level.
54. The five regional syntheses identified lessons learned from and trends evident in evaluations that could inform the debate on FAO's contribution to national and regional results and offer food for thought and suggestions on future planning at regional level. They not only provided a consolidated and summarized view of evaluative findings, but also the common issues and gaps requiring attention. In a sense, the regional syntheses generated new knowledge and insights by repackaging and presenting existing information from a new perspective.

Decentralization

55. UNDS reform requires all agencies to have adequate evaluation capacity to engage in joint evaluation initiatives and quality assurance and oversight mechanisms at country and regional level.⁸ The 2016 evaluation of FAO's evaluation function (FAO, 2016) said "FAO should develop a programme of decentralized evaluations" to "strengthen the evaluation function, complementing the independent evaluation (for which OED is responsible) with evaluations conducted by regional or country offices." OED, therefore, developed a decentralization strategy to bring its evaluative learning closer to those who implement FAO's projects, thereby enhancing their usefulness.
56. Initial efforts included the development and dissemination of a project evaluation manual for decentralized offices (FAO, 2019e). OED also hired an evaluation expert in the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean to pilot support for decentralized evaluations and to increase evaluation use at country and regional level. The 2016 evaluation had highlighted the lack of evaluation capacity in decentralized offices as a major constraint, as well as missed opportunities to contribute to FAO's programming cycle and results-based management at regional and national level. OED, therefore, submitted a proposal, endorsed by the Governing Bodies, for phasing in a decentralization process in the 2021–22 biennium.

⁸ In line with the recommendations of the Evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework (FAO, 2019d).

2.4 Supporting FAO in building an evidence-based Strategic Framework

57. In the face of internal programmatic changes, OED provided an array of innovative evaluative products and services to support the formulation of the Strategic Framework 2022-31 and the development of issue-based programmatic areas of work.
58. The evaluations of the Strategic Results Framework and FAO's contributions to SDG2 and SDG13 (FAO, 2019d; 2020a; forthcoming) made recommendations to support FAO in developing a more robust Framework aligned with the 2030 Agenda and United Nations reform. OED also provided evaluative evidence to inform the development of new, priority programmatic areas.

3. Evaluating FAO's work

3.1 Evaluations in the period 2019–2020

59. In 2019–2020, OED conducted 15 country programme evaluations spanning all regions, 12 programme evaluations (7 of which were global), 58 project and 10 thematic/ corporate evaluations. There was a 40 percent increase in the overall number of evaluations (to 95) from the previous biennium, largely due to a greater number of programme and thematic evaluations. The total number of project evaluations increased 20 percent compared to previous reporting period, to a total of 58.

Table 1: Number of evaluations by region and evaluation type (2019–2020)

Geographical coverage	Evaluation type				Total
	Country programme	Programme	Project	Thematic/ corporate	
Africa	3	4	20		27
Asia and the Pacific	2		10		12
Europe and Central Asia	2				2
Latin America and the Caribbean	4	1	14		19
Near East and North Africa	4		4		8
Global		7	10	10	26
Total	15	12	58	10	95

60. In the biennium, the Office spent USD 12 million on evaluations from both regular and extra-budgetary sources. This comprised USD 3.6 million for 10 thematic evaluations, USD 2.6 million for 15 country programme evaluations and USD 5.7 million for 70 project and programme evaluations (refer to Table 2). The total cost of evaluations varied according to type, geographical coverage and scope.

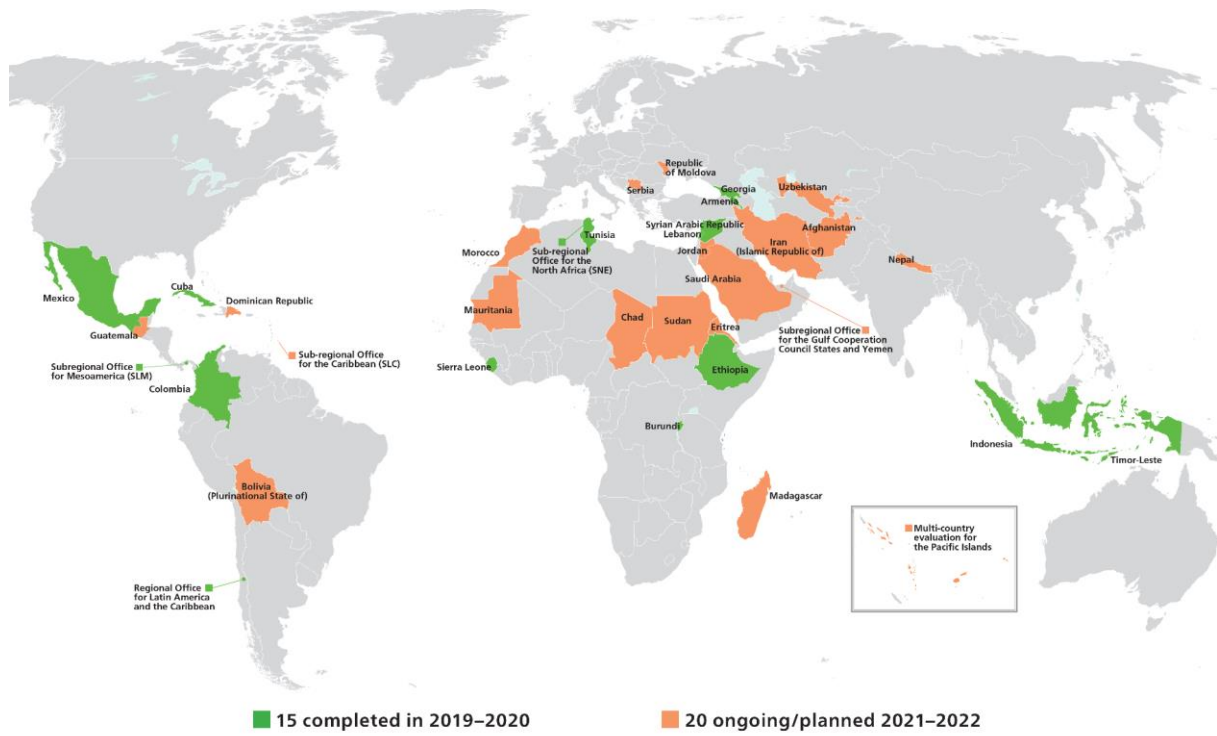
Table 2: Evaluation cost by type

Evaluation type	Number of evaluations	Average cost (USD) ⁹
Country programme	15	187 000
Project/ programme¹⁰	70	82 000
<i>Project evaluations</i>	58	64 000
<i>Programme evaluations</i>	12	170 000
Thematic/ corporate	10	363 000
Total	95	128 000

⁹ Estimate include OED personnel costs for managing evaluations. During the period of work under COVID-19, travel costs were reduced but an increase in management costs was observed.

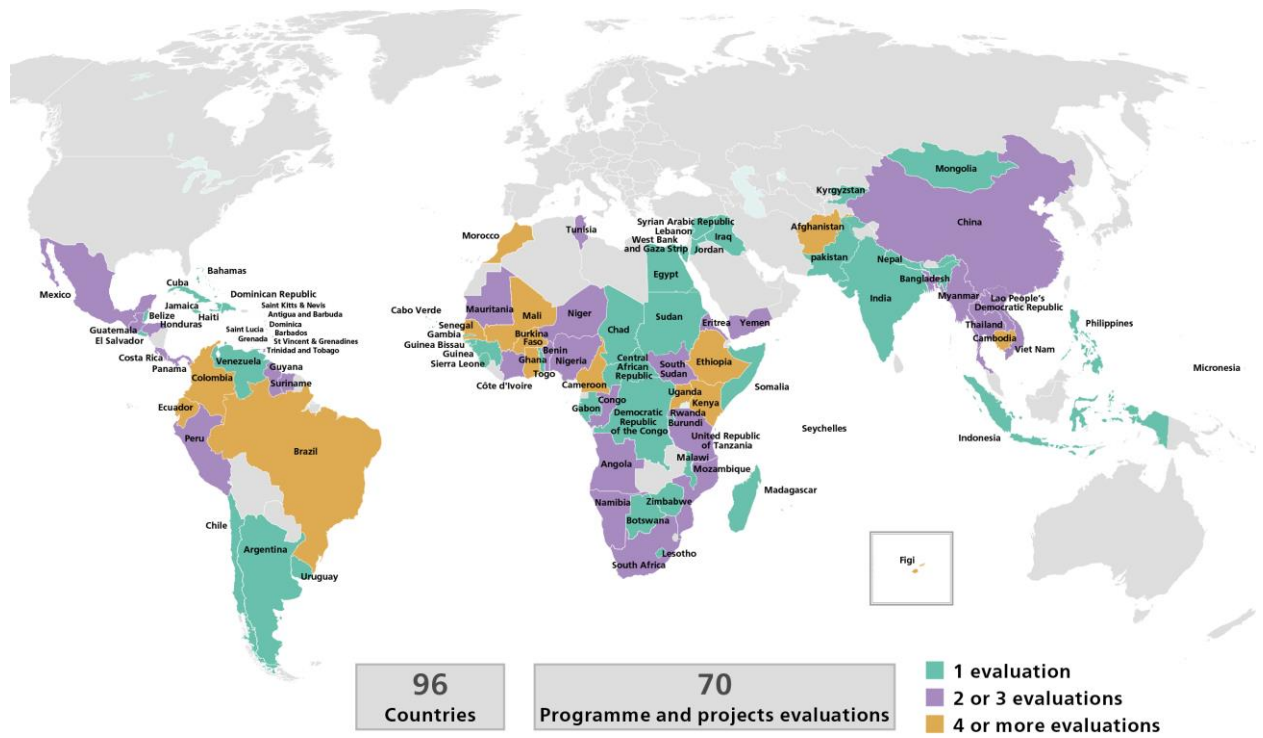
¹⁰ This category covers global, regional and single-country programmes and projects.

Figure 2: Geographical distribution of country programme evaluations



Source: FAO, 2021. Conforms to Map No. 4170 Rev. 19 United Nations

Figure 3: Geographical distribution of project and programme evaluations (2019-2020)



Source: FAO, 2021. Conforms to Map No. 4170 Rev. 19 United Nations

References

- FAO.** 2012. *Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2013. *FAO Policy on Gender Equality: Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/i3205e/i3205e.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2015. *FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/l4476E/i4476e.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2016. *Evaluation of FAO's evaluation function*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/mr742e/mr742e.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2018. *Report of the 125th Session of the Programme Committee (Rome, 12–16 November 2018)*. CL 160/3. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/my401en/my401en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2019a. *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3762en/ca3762en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2019b. *Evaluation of FAO's Work on Gender*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca3755en/ca3755en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2019c. *Evaluation of FAO's private sector partnership strategy*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/mz848en/mz848en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2019d. *Evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6453en/ca6453en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2019e. *OED project evaluation manual for decentralized offices*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4821en/ca4821en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2020a. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 2 – “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” (SDG2 evaluation)*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/highlights/highlights-detail/en/c/1315235/>).
- FAO.** 2020b. *Outline of the Strategic Framework 2022–31 and Outline of the Medium Term Plan 2022–25*. CL 165/3. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nd976en/nd976en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2020c. *Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/cb1583en/cb1583en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2020d. *Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP)*. COAG/2020/14. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nd385en/nd385en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2020e. *Evaluation of the FAO Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CB1636EN/>).
- FAO.** 2020f. *FAO's Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021–2025*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nd961en/nd961en.pdf>).

- FAO.** 2020g. *Draft Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. PC 129/INF/3. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nd940en/nd940en.pdf>).
- FAO.** 2020h. *Risk analysis and guidance for the management and conduct of evaluations during international and national level COVID-19 crisis and restrictions*. OED Guidelines Series 05/20. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8796en/ca8796en.pdf>).
- FAO.** Forthcoming. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace nexus*. Rome.
- FAO.** Forthcoming. *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to climate action (SDG 13)*. Rome.
- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO.** 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en/>).
- Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).** n.d. *Integrated Food Security Phase Classification* (online). Website. Rome. [Last accessed 18 February 2021]. <http://www.ipcinfo.org/>
- International Labour Organization (ILO).** 2017. *The International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture on the new ILO Global Estimates of Child Labour* (online). Statement, 19 September 2017. Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.ilo.org/ipec/news/WCMS_575661/lang--en/index.htm
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).** 2019. *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus*. OECD/Legal/5019. Paris. (also available at <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5019>).
- United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).** 2017. *System-wide Evaluation in Support of UN Reform: Towards Collective Accountability & Learning*. White Paper No. 1. New York. (also available at https://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/EvalReports-other-organisations/UNEG_White_Paper-1_OCT_2017.pdf).
- United Nations General Assembly.** 2014. *Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level*. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2014. A/RES/69/237. New York. (also available at <https://undocs.org/A/RES/69/237>).
- World Food Programme (WFP).** 2020. *2020 – Global Report on Food Crises*. Rome. (also available at <https://www.wfp.org/publications/2020-global-report-food-crises>).

PROGRAMME EVALUATION REPORT 2021



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

Mr Masahiro Igarashi
Director, Office of Evaluation
Email: OED-Director@fao.org
Tel: +39 06570 53903

Food and Agriculture Organization
Viale delle terme di Caracalla 1,
00153 Rome, Italy
Web: www.fao.org/evaluation