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# PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

**Hundred and Thirty-ninth Session**

**Rome, 11-15 November 2024**

**Independent Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function**

**Management Response**

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## I. Introduction

1. FAO welcomes the independent evaluation of FAO's evaluation function (IEoEF) conducted by an external team (Lattanzio) in response to a requirement of the FAO Basic Texts. The last evaluation was completed in 2016<sup>1</sup>. This evaluation covers the period 2017-2023 and focuses on adherence with five globally accepted evaluation principles, namely, credibility, independence, utility, impartiality and transparency. The evaluation coincides with changes implemented in the Office of Evaluation (OED) in response to the new FAO Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025.
2. The evaluation found that “OED has established itself as an actor of high integrity within FAO, thanks to strong ethical standards and the quality of locally visible outposted personnel. *OED evaluations are overall of good quality, and their design is as strong as possible given the constraints of financial and human resources, and intervention-generated data*” (emphasis in the original). “The internal reputation of the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) is good, and the demand for evaluations is high. Since the previous IEoEF 2016-2017, an evaluation culture has clearly risen throughout the organization.”
3. The evaluation also found areas of improvement. OED appreciates the usefulness of the recommendations, although OED does not share some of the opinions expressed and assessments made, particularly those that were premature given that this evaluation started concurrently with reforms being evaluated. Therefore, FAO agrees to implement the recommendations addressed to the Secretariat (Recommendations 2 to 10) as part of a holistic approach to responding to recommendations made by other ongoing processes conducted by reviewers such as auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System. FAO also stands ready to support the Programme Committee (PC) in responding to the Recommendation 1. Listed below, these recommendations align with and reinforce the usefulness of actions ongoing since 2023 in support of the FAO Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Document [PC 120/5](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The FAO Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025](#)

*Independent Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function – Management Response Matrix*

Evaluation Recommendations  (a)	Management response Accepted Partially Accepted Rejected  (b)	Management plan			
		Management actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection  (c)	Responsible unit  (d)	Completion deadline  (e)	Further funding required (Y or N)  (f)
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>The FAO Programme Committee, supported by the Director-General and governing bodies should statutorily increase the independence of OED in decision-making, particularly as regards internal functioning such as hiring, contracting, procurement, and travel. The independence of OED should be secured in the regulatory framework, and tantamount to that of an independent internal oversight body. Consultation with UNEG and comparison with other UN family organisations would be useful. (This recommendation mirrors a similar one made during the previous IEOEF).</p>		<p>Management stands ready to work with the PC and other Governing Bodies as deemed appropriate by PC, on possible measures to develop a regulatory framework that serves as the implementation guidance for the relevant provisions of the FAO Basic Texts, thus securing statutorily the independence of OED. To this end, Management is considering appropriate vehicles, such as the FAO Administrative Manual.</p> <p>Recent actions to enhance OED's independence include increased hiring authority for some positions and revising document production and dissemination processes.</p>	FAO Governing Bodies and Management		N

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<b>Recommendation 2</b>  OED should apply stringent selection of evaluations for its own operations. Among them, OED should prioritize strategic evaluations as well as intermediate level evaluations of strategic importance with high learning potential, such as CPEs, sub-thematic evaluations, regional evaluations, and cluster project evaluations of strategic interest. Project evaluations without strategic relevance should be devolved to budget holders as per Recommendation 5.	Accepted	Actions are ongoing.  The essence of this recommendation – to select evaluations strategically based on their learning potential – is a key element of the FAO Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025. Since its endorsement by the Council and the Conference in July 2023, OED has been working with relevant FAO units to identify gaps and areas of learning needs. To support such efforts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A new process was established to assess (together with programme and project formulators) potential evaluations and determine if these should be conducted by OED or delegated to budget holders (Management).</li> <li>b) A revised Trust Fund Guide was issued in January 2024.</li> <li>c) In consultation with country, regional, and headquarters stakeholders, OED is developing a learning agenda that will identify key learning priorities that will be used to inform evaluation selection decisions.</li> </ol>	OED	31 December 2026	N

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<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>OED should update and consolidate FAO evaluation guidelines, frameworks, and internal guideline memos. OED personnel, budget holders undertaking their own evaluations, and external consultants, would benefit from updated guidelines within an overall evaluation framework, summarized in a fully updated and consolidated OED handbook, in line with up-to-date UNEG standards.</p>	Accepted	<p>Actions are ongoing.</p> <p>This recommendation aligns with past, ongoing and planned activities under the FAO Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025.</p> <p>To date, efforts have focused on responding to critical needs by developing guidance to fill gaps (such as data governance) or updating existing guidance as prioritized by personnel (such as quality assurance processes).</p> <p>Guidance documents are currently being consolidated on an online platform. This work is expected to continue through 2026 and become the foundation for guidance available to FAO personnel outside of OED seeking support in managing or conducting evaluations.</p>	OED	31 December 2026	N

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<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>OED should establish a registry of its recommendations, with a system for following up. This would require an IT-based, searchable registry of recommendations and management responses from 2025 onwards designed for data analysis, with an annual follow-up and update. This supposes that recommendations in OED evaluations be more standardised in terms of format, prioritised, targeted at individual entities, and timebound. The data from this mechanism would be valuable to the Programme Committee and other key users within FAO.</p>	Accepted	<p>Actions are ongoing.</p> <p>OED has strengthened its quality assurance reviews of recommendations to promote high quality and focus on priorities for FAO action.</p> <p>In 2023, OED started a comprehensive analysis of past recommendations to inform revisions to guidance on drafting recommendations (for OED personnel) and respond to a PC request to assess follow-up of recommendations.</p> <p>Upcoming actions: design of an online, searchable registry of recommendations and management responses.</p>	OED	31 December 2025	N

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<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>OED should strengthen the capacity of budget holders to undertake non-strategic evaluations (such as most project evaluations). To this end, OED could design training modules to strengthen the capacity of budget holders such as the GCF, GEF, and other units: budget holders would then be able to gradually take over most project evaluations. OED also needs to step up coaching and advice to budget holders requiring support on ongoing and future evaluations.</p>	Accepted	<p>Actions are ongoing.</p> <p>As part of the implementation of the new FAO Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025, OED maintained an internal team that was established originally to support decentralization efforts. This team provides support to budget holders and project personnel engaging in evaluations.</p> <p>In addition, OED, in consultation with the learning branch of the Human Resource Division (CSH), the Project Support Division (PSS) and Office of Strategy, Programme and Budget (OSP) as needed, will assess the training needs of, and related reference materials for, relevant FAO personnel to help organize and manage evaluations while maintaining independence and avoiding perceived conflicts of interest.</p> <p>This may be based on, or provide information about, resources available outside of FAO (several UN agencies including the UN System Staff College have already developed learning programmes aligned with the UN Evaluation Group's professional competency framework).</p>	OED, in collaboration with CSH, PSS, OSP and other units as relevant	31 December 2026	Y

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<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>OED should establish a standardised, ideally externalised, ex-ante quality assurance system applicable to all FAO evaluations. This system would be underpinned by quality assurance checklists for all types of deliverables. A framework contract with a quality assurance service provider should be considered.</p>	Accepted	<p>OED agrees with the recommendation of establishing an ex-ante quality assurance process for OED, exploring the possibility of contracting out these services when advisable, and making internal and external services available to other units at FAO on a voluntary and cost-recovery basis.</p> <p>However, ex-ante quality assurance (QA) may not necessarily be “ideally externalized,” depending on the needs of the evaluation team and the expertise available in-house. In addition, external quality assurance may not be efficient as it likely requires additional time, coordination effort, and funding.</p> <p>Last, whether non-OED evaluations should be subject to an ex-ante quality assurance process is a Management matter, as OED’s mandate does not extend to evaluations conducted or commissioned by FAO personnel outside of OED. Ex-post quality reviews (for validation purposes) are currently conducted by OED on a need and cost-recovery basis.</p> <p>Upcoming actions:</p> <p>OED will (1) further develop ex-ante (internal) quality assurance (focused on providing formative feedback to enhance quality) and (2) capture lessons from a pilot test of ex-post (external) quality assessments to monitor quality and identify weaknesses that will serve to inform revisions to the approach to ex-ante QA. This work</p>	OED	31 December 2026	Y



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		included the development of QA protocols to standardize and ensure comprehensive ex-ante and ex-post reviews. This work will continue to adjust protocols and develop guidance and processes based on experiences in 2023-2024.			

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<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>OED should finetune, stabilise, and actively communicate, including directly among all OED personnel, its internal structure, tools and procedures. Priority would be given to the INTAKE process, evaluation planning, allocation of evaluations to members of OED, and correcting for unequal access to evaluation managers and team leaders by the various types of evaluation (e.g., emergency/resilience). Change management techniques would be useful in this endeavour.</p>	Accepted	<p>Actions are ongoing.</p> <p>OED has made significant progress in 2023-2024. To illustrate, OED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) holds weekly senior management meetings, biweekly all-OED personnel meetings, monthly supervisors' meetings, and an annual town hall with the OED Director;</li> <li>b) developed an eLibrary, an online repository of documents, that includes all information referenced in this recommendation (organigram, tools, and so on) and serves as a single source of information easily accessible to all OED;</li> <li>c) established a Knowledge Management and Communications team to bolster internal and external communication and knowledge management efforts; and</li> <li>d) has been revising processes (such as Intake) based on early experiences in 2023, including developing a monitoring system to access easily information needed to ensure a balance of work across workstreams.</li> </ul> <p>These and similar efforts will continue to promote efficiencies, support collaborations by strengthening communications, maintain the increased transparency achieved in work allocation, and monitor OED's portfolio/work plan.</p>	OED	31 December 2025	N

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<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>FAO Senior Management, in cooperation with OED, should actively engage OED in the design and deployment of PROMYS. OED would add value and pave the way for mutually reinforcing monitoring, evaluation, and learning at organisational level, by contributing to the design of the system, including indicators, types of data sources and definition of meta-data. This joint endeavour could further support the design of ongoing monitoring initiatives in REU and RLC as testing grounds for the future system, in a mutually beneficial fashion.</p>	Accepted	<p>Actions ongoing.</p> <p>Since the completion of this evaluation, starting in July 2024, PSS and OSP are co-leading the development of the Corporate Projects/Portfolio Monitoring Framework in the context of the FAO Strategic Framework and ongoing UN Development System Repositioning at country level, leveraging high level internal expertise across the Organization through the establishment of an internal Monitoring Expert Group (MEG). OED, all FAO Regional Offices, and other experts across the Organization, are standing members of the MEG, contributing actively in taking forward the conception work, including design of indicators, to ensure mutually reinforcing monitoring, evaluation and learning. This work represents an important element underpinning the conceptual development of PROMYS. As the PROMYS project progresses, FAO will engage OED in [other] key conceptualization and overall framework development stages.</p>	PSS, OSP, PROMYS Governance	Aligned with PROMYS timeline	N

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<p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>OED should generalise the production of standardised, concise, user-friendly, and accessible knowledge products, building among others on the existing practice of evaluation syntheses. OED could consider the use of social media, intranet, “nuggets” videos. The role of Evaluation Focal Persons and outposted OED personnel could be expanded to include, for example, presenting common findings/issues in regional country evaluations from which FAO Representatives (FAORs) could learn.</p>	Accepted	<p>Actions are ongoing.</p> <p>OED has invested in knowledge sharing and management efforts during the transition period as it recognizes the importance of producing standardized, concise, and accessible knowledge products. To support these efforts, OED has strengthened the Knowledge Management (KM) and Communications team with dedicated and highly skilled professionals. Since 2023, OED dissemination plans have also included the use of social media, the intranet, and targeted videos which will be further enhanced. Upcoming actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) OED KM annual plans to integrate and support efforts across regional offices</li> <li>b) Development of OED KM signature products (regional syntheses, systematic reviews, and briefs) and KM events (workshops, briefings, presentations)</li> <li>c) Increased use of digital and online tools for broader dissemination and use of evaluative information beyond and across evaluation reports.</li> </ul> <p>The role of OED Regional Evaluation Coordinators (RECs) will continue to include the production and dissemination of learning and knowledge products at both the regional and country levels.</p>	OED	30 June 2026	N

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<p><b>Recommendation 10</b></p> <p>OED should strengthen the dissemination of evaluation products and digests and facilitate users’ access. It could generalise evaluation briefs in a much more concise and visual format. OED may consider translation of evaluation briefs in relevant languages (including, where applicable, national languages), increase the user-friendliness of evaluation reports and standardise the format of the executive summaries and recommendations. OED could also proactively disseminate evaluation products with identified evaluation users or key learning partners.</p>	<p><b>Accepted</b></p>	<p>Actions are ongoing.</p> <p>OED recognizes the importance of focusing dissemination to promote access and use of findings to drive change.</p> <p>OED has hired additional personnel for its Knowledge Management and Communications team, including a full-time coordinator and a communications specialist.</p> <p>Upcoming actions: The Knowledge Management and Communications team has been tasked with revamping knowledge-sharing services and products to facilitate uptake of evaluation results.</p> <p>In addition to this and other planned actions mentioned under Recommendation 9, OED’s ongoing efforts in this regard include developing an approach to measure and monitor use systematically.</p>	<p>OED</p>	<p>31 December 2025</p>	<p>Y</p>