



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



OFFICE OF EVALUATION

Thematic evaluation series

# Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the reduction of rural poverty through Strategic Programme 3

ANNEX 1: EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

March 2017



**THEMATIC EVALUATION SERIES**

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to the reduction of rural poverty  
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**March 2017**

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This report is available in electronic format at: <http://www.fao.org/evaluation>

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## 1. Introduction

- 1 The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Office of Evaluation was asked to conduct an evaluation of Strategic Objective 3 (SO3) "Reduce Rural Poverty"<sup>1</sup> during the period of 2016-17. This evaluation assessed FAO's contributions to rural poverty reduction, and identified lessons learned, gaps and best practices that could enhance the FAO's poverty reduction efforts. The evaluation began with an evaluability assessment in early 2016, followed by a comprehensive evaluation carried out in the second part of 2016.
- 2 The objective of the evaluability assessment was to determine the readiness of evaluating FAO's work in this area. With this objective in mind, the assessment reviewed the clarity of the programme logic and the extent of completion of planned activities and use of resources, in order to identify which components of FAO's SO3 programme were feasible and worthwhile to evaluate for results (bearing in mind the relatively short time since the programme started, and the availability of appropriate data and information with which to assess programme contributions). The evaluability assessment resulted in proposals on the scope, approach, methodological design and work-plan of the evaluation.
- 3 The scope of work consisted of the following:
  - Review the intervention logic (i.e. theory of change, assumptions, intended mechanisms and expected outcomes of the programme);
  - Judge the extent to which the design, strategy, resources and implementation mechanisms are appropriate given the intervention logic, and are likely to lead to the expected results expressed in the programme logframes/theory of change;
  - Review evaluative data currently available and accessible to assess contributions, collect relevant reports and datasets, and identify data gaps;
  - Identify appropriate evaluation questions, taking into account the needs and expectations of stakeholders and availability of information to answer the questions.
- 4 This report is structured under the following sections: Design and intervention logic (theory of change); Resource management; Stakeholder engagement; Partnerships; and Achievement of results. In addition, in preparation for a detailed evaluation design, a preliminary identification of issues to address and some criteria for selecting case-study countries were presented.

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1 <http://www.fao.org/about/what-we-do/so3/en/>

## 2. Design and intervention logic

5 This section seeks to respond to the following questions.

Design	
<b>Coherence and clarity</b>	How clear is the SO3 theory of change and logical framework? Are the long-term impact and outcomes clearly identified and are the proposed steps towards achieving these clearly defined?
<b>Relevance</b>	Is the programme objective relevant to the needs and demands of Member Countries? What are the linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals and with the other FAO strategic objectives?

### 2.1 FAO's Strategic Framework

6 The new Strategic Framework 2010-2019, of which the Strategic Objectives are the core elements, seeks to improve the impact i) of FAO programmes through effective translation of its normative work into country-level impact, and ii) of its global knowledge products into tangible policy and practice. The Medium Term Plan 2014-2017, approved by the FAO Conference (June 2013), incorporates the new strategic framework architecture in its results framework as follows:

- **FAO vision:** A world free from hunger and malnutrition, with food and agriculture contributing to improving living standards especially of the poorest in an economically, socially, environmentally sustainable manner.
- **Three global goals of members:** Eradication of hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity; elimination of poverty, increased food production, rural development and sustainable livelihoods; and sustainable management and utilization of natural resources: land, water, air, climatic and genetic.
- **Strategic objectives:** Five direct objectives SO1-SO5: i) eradication of hunger; ii) increasing sustainable production; iii) eliminating rural poverty; iv) enabling more inclusive and efficient food and agricultural systems; and v) increasing the resilience of livelihoods; supplemented by a sixth objective on technical quality, knowledge and services.
- **Cross cutting themes:** Gender, governance, environment and nutrition.
- **Seven core functions:** Normative work and standards setting; data and information; policy dialogue; capacity development; uptake of knowledge and technologies; facilitating partnerships; and advocacy and communications.
- **Functional objectives:** Outreach, information technology, FAO governance, oversight and direction, and efficient and effective administration.

7 Strategic Objectives express development outcomes (at the national, regional or global level), and are expected to be achieved by members over a ten-year horizon, with FAO's assistance. Organizational Outcomes reflect changes in the national, regional or global enabling environment and in capacities to achieve strategic objectives. Outputs are FAO's direct contributions to Organizational Outcomes, drawing on delivery of interventions using both regular and extra-budgetary resources. They address the 'What' aspects of the change to which FAO seeks to contribute. Core functions express FAO's areas of expertise aligned with its core mandate, and are the means that answer 'How' FAO seeks to contribute to the overall goals of members and FAO's own vision.



Figure 1: Linkage between Strategic Framework and FAO Vision and Member Goals

2.2 Theory of change and intervention strategy

8 The evaluation team reviewed a number of FAO documents that describe the theory of change and intervention logic. The rationale for SO3 is that a large share of extreme poverty is concentrated in rural areas, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia. While there has been a halving of global extreme poverty levels between 1990 and 2010, over three-fourths of the extreme poor live in rural areas and subsist on agriculture. Therefore, reducing rural poverty assumes direct priority in attaining global development targets, especially as the SDG 2030 Goal 1 is ending poverty in all forms, everywhere. Rural poverty is mostly concentrated among households of small-scale subsistence producers and family farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, forest-dependent people, the landless poor employed in agriculture and in non-agricultural rural enterprises, and other rural people who are unable to access productive opportunities of any kind (e.g. people with disabilities or seniors). They are characterized by:

- constraints affecting their productivity and limiting their incomes;
- wage-earning activities in precarious employment conditions and low remuneration levels;
- inability accessing farm and non-farm employment opportunities;
- social and political marginalization, exclusion and discrimination;
- low levels of health and education;
- lack of access to productive assets;
- cultural and linguistic barriers.

9 The key underpinning factors for these manifestations include:

- Inappropriately targeted policies, resulting in exclusion of some populations from productive resources, services, political and social representation, employment, and public support programmes; weak national information systems to identify inequalities; and lack of capacity to monitor rural poverty reduction
- Lack of secure and equitable access to natural capital and common pool resources due to competing and conflicting interests and demands, over exploitation and weak governance

- Inadequate access to rural infrastructure and services due to failure or inadequacy or unaffordability of key input services (physical, knowledge, legal, marketing and financial), and poor or absent physical infrastructure (roads, connectivity, power, healthcare), which impede productive engagement toward development.
  - Weak or absent rural institutions and social capital due to a lack of voice resulting from remoteness, difficulty in accessing markets and other channels of political and economic activity, and lack of knowledge of their rights.
  - Low rural employment opportunities for decent work conditions due to limited and dwindling natural resource potential; the lack of alternative remunerative off-farm activities without health and safety risks; and a lack of proactive policies directing and channeling decent rural employment.
  - Insufficient social protection due to difficulties integrating social protection activities with hunger and poverty reduction, including elements such as entitlements to production, labour, markets and social transfers, and inadequate financial resource allocations due to competing priorities.
- 10 Tackling these diverse and commingling factors calls for a multi-pronged approach to reducing rural poverty, consisting of three pillars (outcome areas):
- a coherent policy approach embedding rural poverty reduction in a broader strategy for sustainable rural development, ensuring empowerment and improved access to services, markets and inputs;
  - ensuring economic growth translates into decent farm and off-farm employment opportunities, especially for women, youth and indigenous people; and
  - maximizing synergies between social protection and rural development policies for positive impact on rural poverty reduction, food security and sustainable management of natural resources.
- 11 The means through which FAO combats rural poverty reduction are i) access through empowerment, which provides sustainable economic livelihoods from natural resources; ii) rural employment creation, which augments on-farm and off-farm livelihoods; and iii) strengthened social protection systems in rural areas and economies, which build resilience to risks and disasters.
- 12 FAO's contributions under these three pillars seek to strengthen the country-level enabling environment to reflect enhanced and equitable access; greater opportunities to access decent rural employment; and improving the impact of social protection systems in rural areas and on the rural poor. Accordingly, SO3 is designed around these elements, as reflected in its three outcomes:
- Outcome 3.1: Enhanced and equitable access to productive resources, services, organizations and markets, and can manage resources more sustainably.
  - Outcome 3.2: Greater opportunities to access decent farm and non-farm employment.
  - Outcome 3.3: Social protection systems strengthened in support of sustainable rural poverty reduction.
- 13 FAO's influence and contributions are provided through: evidence-based cross-sectoral policy formulation and implementation; capacity development of institutions key to rural development; and technical support to creating information systems and knowledge instruments to support policy development and monitoring. The full description is below.

**Box 1.** Result framework of Strategic Objective 3

*Outcome 3.1: The rural poor have enhanced and equitable access to productive resources, services, organizations and markets, and can manage their resources more sustainably.*

- Output 3.1.1 Support to strengthen rural organizations and institutions and facilitate empowerment of rural poor.
- Output 3.1.2 Support to the promotion and implementation of pro-poor approaches to policies and programmes which improve access to and sustainable management of natural resources.
- Output 3.1.3 Support to improve access of poor rural producers and households to appropriate technologies and knowledge, inputs and markets.
- Output 3.1.4 Support to innovations in rural services provision and infrastructure development accessible to the rural poor.
- Output 3.1.5 Cross-sectoral policy advice and capacity development for the definition of gender equity and sustainable rural development and poverty reduction strategies.

*Outcome 3.2 The rural poor have greater opportunities to access decent farm and non-farm employment.*

- Output 3.2.1 Evidence-based policy support and capacity development in the formulation and implementation of policies, strategies and programmes that generate decent rural employment with particular focus on fostering youth and rural women's economic and social empowerment.
- Output 3.2.2. Policy support to extend the application of International Labour Standards (ILS) to rural areas.
- Output 3.2.3 Technical support to establish information systems and generate data and knowledge on decent rural employment at national, regional and global levels.

*Outcome 3.3 Social protection systems are strengthened in support of sustainable rural poverty reduction.*

- Output 3.3.1 Policy advice, capacity development and advocacy are provided for improving social protection systems to foster sustainable and equitable rural development, poverty reduction, and food security and nutrition.
- Output 3.3.2. Information systems and evidence-based knowledge instruments are improved to assess the impact of social protection mechanisms on reducing inequalities, improving rural livelihoods and strengthening ability of the rural poor to manage risks.

- 14 The delivery of products and services across these outcomes is organized through nine dedicated multidisciplinary and cross-organizational "delivery teams", comprising three regional initiatives where SO3 is in the lead and six thematic teams that develop global knowledge products and provide regional and country level support (other than activities of the SO3 led regional initiatives). The nine delivery modalities are as follows.

**Box 2.** Delivery modalities of SO3

*Regional Initiatives*

- Empowering Smallholders and Family Farms (*ECA*);
- Family Farming and Rural Territorial Development (*LAC*);
- Sustainable small-scale agriculture for inclusive development (*NENA*);

*Thematic areas of work*

- Access Initiative;
- Decent Rural Employment Initiative;
- Social Protection Initiative;
- Rural Women's Economic Empowerment;
- Rural Livelihoods Monitor;
- Inclusive Finance for Rural Development;

- 15 These are supported and intertwined with a copious output of knowledge products, which include:

- Data and statistics;
- Guidance and policy assessment tools;
- Policy and practice guidelines, impact assessment studies;

- Capacity development, learning programmes, courses and training resources;
  - Technical manuals and other technical products;
  - Task force reports relating to rural development / area development policy support;
  - Knowledge networks to inform policy and planning.
- 16 In total Outcome 1 list 93 products under three clusters; Outcome 2 lists 22 products and Outcome 3 lists 42. In some ways, every output of FAO creates and/or distributes some form of knowledge, and therefore every activity can be linked to the repertoire of knowledge products. This makes it somewhat difficult for the evaluation to classify knowledge products distinctly from technical support and policy dialogue work. In this regard, the evaluation team might develop some criteria to distinguish and select a few knowledge products for more detailed assessments in the evaluation.
- 17 The confluence of FAO's work represented by a combination of knowledge products, field projects, and technical assistance/backstopping, delivered under the three SO3 Outcome areas, seek to improve the enabling environment to support enhanced and equitable access to institutions and resources, enhanced rural employment opportunities and improved social protection, which in turn are expected to improve the rural poverty indicators in the countries. Figure 2 depicts this chain of influence.

<b>FAO Vision</b>	A world free from hunger and malnutrition, with food and agriculture contributing to improving living standards especially of the poorest in an economically, socially, environmentally sustainable manner	
<b>Goal</b>	Economic and social progress resulting in elimination of poverty, and eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.	
	<b>Strategic Objective 3:</b> <b>RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION</b>	Reduction in the poverty headcount ratio at rural poverty line; Reduction in absolute number of rural poor
	<b>RURAL POOR</b>  Including women, youth and indigenous people	Inclusive equitable access to resources and services  Augmented farm/off farm employment  Stable, hunger free, food-secure risk-prepared, rural livelihoods
	<b>Expected Policy and Institutional Changes in Enabling Environment</b>	
	<b>Govt. ministries</b>  <b>Implementing agencies</b>  <b>Rural institutions</b>  <b>Other actors</b>	3.1 Cross Sectoral Policy support for Enhanced and Secure Access, Empowerment of Institutions, Improved Targeting and Rural Service provision  3.2 Policies and programmes for Decent Rural Employment, and abolishing child labour  3.3 Social Protection systems integrated with rural development, hunger and food security programmes
	<b>Thrust of Programmatic support under Strategic Framework (SO3)</b>	
	<b>FAO,</b>  <b>Development</b>  <b>partners</b>	Evidence based policy formulation  Institutional and technical capacity development  Information systems, data and knowledge  Technical assistance

**Figure 2:** SO3 result chain – linkages between outputs, outcomes and objectives

## 2.3 Linkages with member goals and SDGs

- 18 SO3's objective is directly embedded in the Global Goals of Members, especially Goal 2: elimination of poverty through economic and social progress for all, and the new Sustainable Development Goals 2030. SO3 is in a sense a demographic subset of SDG 1: ending poverty in all forms, everywhere. In order for this to be achieved, rural poverty must be eradicated as well, globally, through economic and social progress of the rural poor.

### Box 3. Alignment with the SDGs

The Strategic Framework formulation took place amidst the larger United Nations-wide process of articulating the post-MDG scenario and the development of the new Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs formally were adopted in Sept 2015, and consist of 17 goals and 169 indicators<sup>2</sup>. It is therefore important to ascertain how the strategic objectives correspond to the SDGs, and to consider how the results framework aligns with the indicators and measures used in the SDGs. To do this, the evaluation team reviewed the Final Indicators report prepared by the Leadership Council of UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, which details the indicators under each goal and assigns potential lead agencies for each<sup>3</sup>; and FAO's internal note on aligning SOs with the SDGs. SO3 directly relates to four SDGs (SDG 1, 2, 8 and 10) and also contributes to Goals 4, 5 and 16. The SDG indicators for several goals are specific and concrete, and can be directly used as outcome indicators for SO3's results.

- 19 Thus, the ultimate aim of SO3 and its successors under future strategic frameworks is to contribute to ending poverty by 2030 for the 750 million rural poor, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia. More specific to FAO's work planning, notable reductions in rural poverty should result in at least the Focus Countries, Close Observation Countries, and Target countries, which receive a major share of SO3 coverage and resources.
- 20 The SO3 goal has thus a clear focus: rural poverty reduction – the reduction of poverty levels in rural areas and among rural populations. Drawing from the SDGs directly, the end goal for SO3 would be the eradication of rural poverty by 2030 in all countries where FAO is engaged. A crude estimate of the magnitude of achieving the SO3 goal can be made using poverty gaps and capital-output multipliers. These are summarised below.
- SDG target 2030: USD 1.25 per day income, or USD 456 per annum, per capita;
  - Assuming all this is end product, this corresponds to USD 456 per capita GDP;
  - For a country with an average poverty gap of 25%, this implies that a GDP expansion of USD 114 per capita must take place for poverty eradication.
  - Assuming an average incremental capital output ratio of three for developing countries, this implies an incremental investment of USD 342 per capita. Translating for 750 million rural poor, this represents an aggregate capital infusion of **USD 256 billion in rural development**.
- 21 While FAO's interventions are all in necessary areas of institutional strengthening and policy formulation aspects, they are by themselves not sufficient to attain progress in rural poverty reduction. Additional conditions and factors on which FAO and other development partners may have limited influence or control are:
- National ownership and commitment to institute appropriate legal, regulatory framework recognising principles of equitable access to resources, knowledge and policy processes;
  - Well-articulated poverty reduction strategies and programmes targeting rural poor, with adequately targeted resource allocations toward integrated rural development;
  - Positive, duly incentivised business and investment climate supporting private participation in the rural economy;

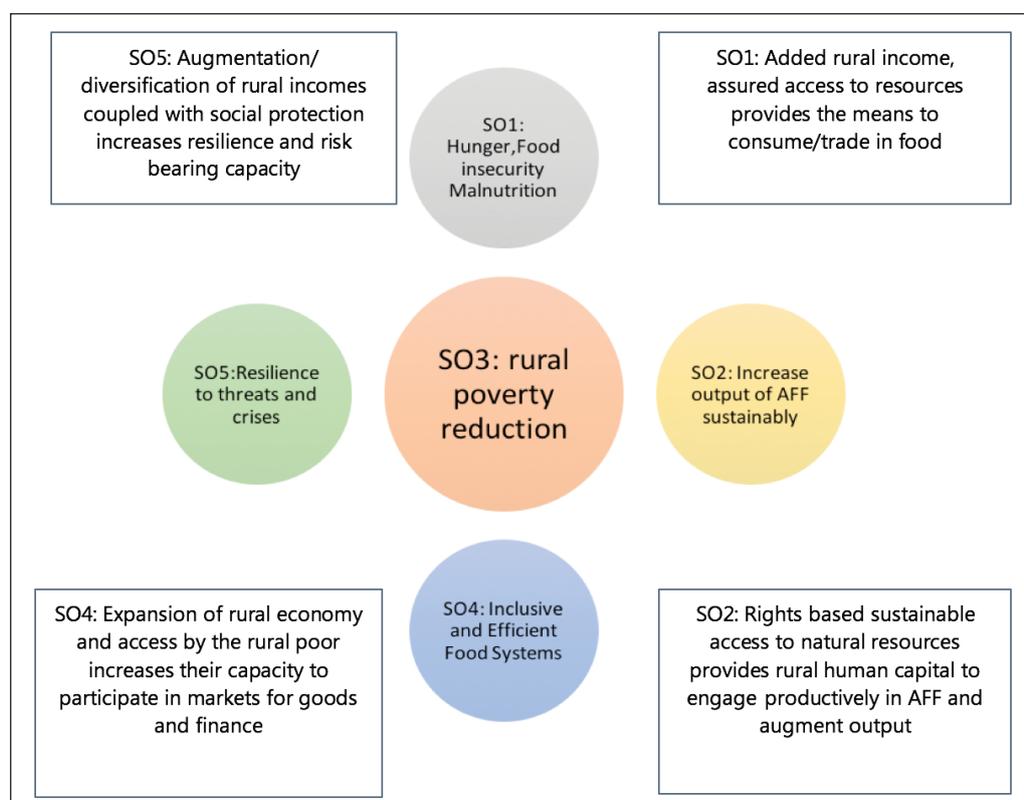
2 UN Resolution on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

3 Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, June 2015, <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/150612-FINAL-SDSN-Indicator-Report1.pdf>

- Reliable data and information systems for policy formulation, targeting and monitoring;
- Willingness and absorptive capacities for effective use/ application of knowledge and technical support received from development partners;
- Overall state of political and economic stability, and power distribution among diversely affected interest groups.

## 2.4 Linkages among Strategic Objectives

- 22 The SO3 objective as formulated is directly linked to and is a subset of the overall goal of the Revised Strategic Framework as well as FAO's vision (see Schematic), and is also intertwined with SO1 – eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; SO2 – increase/ improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, fisheries and forestry, sustainably; and to a certain extent SO5 – increase resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises. The attainment of these other SOs directly contributes to rural poverty reduction, and vice versa: reduction in rural poverty levels can lead to a reduction in hunger, make rural communities more resilient to crises and disasters, and increase their participation in markets and trade.



## 2.5 Issues for the evaluation

- 23 Based on the review of FAO's documents and plans, the outcome areas identified by FAO for SO3 appear to be logical, relevant and essential ingredients to addressing the challenge of rural poverty reduction. However, it has been over three years since they were first formulated and several new initiatives, including the renewed impetus given to the topic by the SDGs, will merit revisiting the logic of the programme and taking into account both internal and external developments. Also, a condition for (or outcome of) their implementation will be the availability of adequate resource allocations by both government and private sector actors in the form of capital for infrastructure, productive capacities, and value addition in agriculture/fisheries/forestry value chains.
- 24 Contributing to the members' goal of reducing poverty is a major challenge for FAO. In assessing FAO's contributions, the evaluation would look at the effective application of FAO's comparative advantages, which in the case of SO3 seems to lie in: i) supporting

the mobilization of investments for rural and agricultural development; ii) support to the development and implementation of internationally-agreed codes, norms, standards and good practices; iii) extensive experience in supporting evidence-based policy formulation and identifying lessons learned, including with a wealth of partners; iv) promoting research and knowledge sharing, and cooperating with national authorities to develop capacities; v) developing and testing models and options for intervention; and vi) in monitoring and evaluation.

25 Similarly, SDGs were formulated for the time frame 2015-2030, while the Strategic Framework has a horizon of 2010-2019. How are SDG indicators being incorporated into the Strategic Framework working backward to create appropriate output level metrics that lead to the SDG indicators? A number of SDG indicators are directly relevant to SO3 and can be used for results tracking at the outcome level. The feasibility of reporting country level data and progress on these could also be examined. In assessing synergies with other Strategic Objectives to achieve faster rural poverty reduction, some aspects to be considered could include the following:

- How does SO1's focus on hunger, food security and malnutrition support augmentation of livelihoods for the rural poor?
- How does SO2's focus on sustainable expansion of food production improve production systems characterising the rural poor?
- How does SO4's focus on inclusion and efficiency connect standards, markets and finance with value chains linked to the rural poor?
- How does SO5's focus on resilience support the rural poor?

26 Finally, FAO is only one among several actors working to reduce poverty. Given that the strategic framework emphasizes country level results, the evaluation could look at the synergies with other relevant agencies, especially within the United Nations system. For instance, UNDP, which has wide country presence across regions, has MDGs and poverty reduction as one of its core programme areas. In countries with a large rural population, it can be assumed that such work would include coverage of rural poverty. Accordingly, it would be useful to study how the different agencies synergize their work, which covers the same beneficiaries and counterparts.

### 3. Resource management

27 In order to operationalize its vision, FAO and the SO3 team in particular have devised a series of planning tools, implementation mechanisms and approaches that were reviewed by the evaluation team. Particular attention was paid to resource allocation and the new practice of prioritizing the assistance in a selected number of focus countries.

#### 3.1 Resource allocation

28 This section seeks to answer the following questions:

<b>Resource management and planning</b>
How effectively was the resource allocation process managed?
How clearly have these allocations been made, communicated to and understood by implementing units?
What improvements should be made to enhance the clarity and transparency of the allocation processes and to ensure that they are results oriented?

29 The 2014-15 biennial work plan for SO3 entailed a total resource envelope of USD 121 million, composed of USD 48 million of regular programme funding and USD 73 million in extra budgetary funding. Actual delivery was lower, at USD 106 million, composed of USD 47 million of regular programme funding and USD 58 million in extra budgetary funding. Allocations among the three outcomes were: Outcome 3.1 (78%), followed by 13% for Outcome 3.2 and 9 % for Outcome 3.3. The 2016-17 budgets are significantly higher at USD 165 million, with USD 64 million in regular programme funding and USD 101 million in extra budgetary funding.

30 Although the design of SO3 does not refer to the preponderance of any pillar over the others, de facto, there has been a skewed allocation of resources toward Outcome 3.1- Access and Empowerment, which delivered over USD 82 million in over 40 countries – almost 78% of the resources allocated; Outcome 3.2 Decent Rural Employment delivered USD 13.8 million (13%) in over 12 countries; and Outcome 3.3 Social Protection delivered USD 9.5 million (9%) in 10 countries. This variation is even greater in the case of extra budgetary funding, with the three outcomes receiving 87%, 10% and less than 2% of extra budgetary resources for 2014-15.

31 The uneven distribution of resources across outcome areas points to the need to consider several aspects: the pattern of needs and demands in the target countries; the relative capacity gaps in the enabling environment in countries; FAO's supply side constraints; and the availability and preference of donor funding across the three outcome areas. To an extent, this mismatch suggests reconsidering the importance of Rural Employment and Social Protection as key pieces of the poverty reduction problem.

32 The evaluation team learned that a key factor affecting the resource and delivery trends was that Social Protection and Decent Rural Employment are not readily recognised as domains of FAO's comparative advantage. The multipronged approach of the revised Strategic Framework should demonstrate more clearly how FAO adds distinct value to Social Protection and Employment. Moreover, Social Protection has traditionally been embedded in the Resilience portfolio, from a programme budget and resource allocation standpoint. To separate or reappportion resources linking to social protection under more than one SO has been a challenge, especially in the FAO country offices. This may have had impacts on the resource allocation across SO3 outcomes.

33 The evaluation learned that Social Protection as a theme can be culturally sensitive in some countries. Also, social protection programmes must be funded largely from budgetary resources, which is a challenge in several low income countries. These realities may also have resulted in a low 'overt' demand for products and services in social protection.

- 34 From a supply side assessment, the evaluation team found that most of 2014-15 went into defining an appropriate scope, role, approach and entry points for FAO's work in decent rural employment and social protection, and in building internal consensus and technical skills/ capacities to deliver products and services in these areas. Although FAO has built partnerships with ILO, UNICEF and other United Nations agencies that play a leading role in these domains, there are skill gaps within FAO, with only a handful of staff having expertise: three persons in DRE and social protection at headquarters, and practically no expertise in the regional offices.
- 35 Thus, resource allocations for decent rural employment and social protection reflect the presence of supply side constraints as much as the nature of demands. FAO is augmenting its human resources in these areas and this will in turn lead to increased ability to deliver programmatic support, which can then become a reason to seek additional resources for scaling up delivery.

### *Resource mobilisation*

- 36 Resource mobilisation is based on the Refocused Resource Mobilisation Strategy, led by the Donor Liaison and Resource Mobilization Team. The key principles followed include: resource mobilisation primarily aimed to support the Strategic Framework, promotion of unearmarked and lightly earmarked contributions, and a strategic dialogue with resource partners. Alignment of resource partner interests with FAO's was accomplished through the Corporate Areas for Resource Mobilisation, Regional Initiatives and Country Programme Frameworks. For SO3, there were two corporate areas – Rural transformations: Boosting smallholder farming and rural employment, and Social protection for food security and rural poverty reduction – and three regional initiatives.
- 37 The resource mobilisation planning process involves: identification of initial focus countries (10 for SO3) and regional partners at the national, regional, liaison office and headquarters level, and matching them to SO3 programmes; and coordinated action with the Technical Cooperation and Management Programme Department, in the capitals of the resource partner countries, at regional level (REOs) and at national level (local donor representatives) for enlisting commitments for 'thematic' or geographic areas of interest. FAO is increasingly promoting unearmarked funding, including multi-partner funding instruments into umbrella programmes covering global initiatives. Strategic Programme Leaders have an important role in resource mobilisation as champions for their themes and major areas of work. Moreover, there is need for improved coordination of efforts by technical units and Strategic Programme Leaders in resource mobilisation; transforming requests into concrete products under broader Corporate Areas for Resource Mobilisation; and having country level entry points in at least a selection of focus countries.

## **3.2 Focus countries**

- 38 Whereas the first biennial work plans for 2014-15 drew substantially from ongoing and previously planned activities and mapped them across SOs, for 2016-17 an elaborate exercise was undertaken to identify and prioritize countries for programming under the five SOs.
- 39 The country prioritization exercise included the following categories:
- Target countries: Countries in which work under any SO3 output is expected to demonstrate results within the biennium reporting period. Results were targeted in 48 countries in 2014-15, and for 32 countries in 2016-17 (this was understood to be a result of consolidation and planning).
  - Focus countries: Countries where poverty levels are high and there is demonstrated demand for rural poverty reduction interventions from the country, as well as sufficient internal capacity at FAO to respond. SO3 aims to follow an integrated approach in these countries, connecting work across outputs and outcomes. There are 36 focus countries for 2016-17.
  - Regional initiative countries: The 24 countries covered by the three SO3 regional initiatives. All regional initiative countries are automatically focus countries. All focus countries are all automatically target countries.

- Super focus countries: These are a further distillation of focus countries, in which SO3 is likely to have significant impact using an integrated approach, with work planned across the three outcomes. The criteria for distillation are: a critical mass of planned activities under SO3 (three to six output targets for 2016-17, cross-SO synergies), with activities under all SOs; part of regional initiatives and countries proposed for Youth Employment Programmes; and have average scores of 'medium and above' for the four indicators in the Corporate Baseline Assessment and Outcome Assessments. For SO3, 13 Super Focus countries have been shortlisted: eight in Africa, two in Asia, two in ECA, and one in LAC.
  - CBA countries: The 39 statistically sampled countries for which a Corporate Baseline Assessment was carried out in 2014-15, plus additional countries chosen by respective SOs; 19 in case of SO3 (total 58 countries). For 49 of these, a mid-term Corporate Outcome Assessment was completed in 2016.
- 40 This priority and target setting exercise was initiated by headquarters and was perceived as largely headquarters centred. The evaluation team received some feedback that the process could have been more bottom-up than top-down. Additionally, there are sensitivities among member countries to being ranked or 'de-ranked' on the basis of featuring in these lists. There is an implicit expectation that focus countries would receive more programme resources and activities, and this influences countries and FAORs to attempt being included as focus countries. However, the senior leadership at FAO clarified explicitly that resource allocation is not the prime objective of determining focus countries; however, some correlation of resource allocation can be expected given the larger extent of results targeted in these countries.
- 41 From the evaluation perspective, prioritized countries are likely to report more concrete results under various outcomes. This in turn will have an influence on the selection of countries for the field mission and case study plans.

### **3.3 Issues for the evaluation**

- 42 Not all countries require the same level of assistance in all areas. This could justify a non-uniform spread of activities across countries under the three outcomes, as shown by the preponderance of Outcome 3.1 in the budget allocations and delivery. However, non-uniform coverage can also result due to the lack of sufficient resources to implement an 'all of SO3' approach, or more specifically, a lack of resource mobilisation in the newer domains of SP and DRE. The evaluation could check for resource mobilisation constraints present across outcomes and considering expanding country coverage, in view of the SDG targets of universal eradication of poverty by 2030.
- 43 Notwithstanding the sensitivity around the classification of focus countries it would be useful to assess whether and how the counterparts in the focus countries perceive their status as flagships for results under SO3, and how this bears on their own policies and commitments toward rural poverty reduction.

## 4. Stakeholder engagement

44 This section seeks to answer the following questions.

<b>Understanding of goals by stakeholders</b>
How clearly has the program logic been communicated to programming units and how well have they been understood?
Is there a shared understanding of targeted results and the means of achieving them? To what extent are different stakeholders holding different views about the project objectives and how they will be achieved? How aligned are the results chains of country and regional programme structures with the Strategic Framework architecture?
What improvements, if any, should be made to enhance the understanding of programme goals and accountabilities for the rest of the project cycle?

- 45 The thinking toward a Strategic Framework was a transformative process within FAO, and was simultaneous with the ongoing decentralisation process. When the first work plan 2014-15 was rolled out, FAO country programmes were already under implementation. This necessitated a 'retro-fit' approach to map activities and resources to report contributions and the SO results chain framework. As a result, programmatic coverage was somewhat patchy within and across SOs. Since the allocation of activities to specific SOs was done by FAORs, the SO3 activities were not always aligned with other SOs, especially SO1. However, this imbalance is expected to be corrected in subsequent work plans, and with greater alignment with the new CPFs being formulated.
- 46 The Strategic Framework architecture also led to a matrix structure for delivery, with the Strategic Objective Coordinators coordinating the implementation of respective SOs, and the actual delivery of tasks and activities entrusted to various divisions. SO focal points were appointed in regional/sub regional centres to facilitate countries in understanding, adapting and implementing the new architecture, and to eventually report results in a unified manner that can be aggregated and compared across countries. Regional retreats have been held to improve understanding of SOs and to map the activities under CPFs to various SOs and individual outcomes.
- 47 The SP3 team is fully aligned with the programme logic and the inter-linkages among the three intervention streams: Access, Decent Rural Employment and Social Protection. However, some respondents noted that Social Protection is a relatively new work stream at FAO: internal capacities would need to be fortified and policy engagement expanded beyond the traditional counterpart, the Ministry of Agriculture, to include ministries such as Social Welfare, Labour, Women and Rural Development.
- 48 The evaluation team's interactions with SO3 focal points found that there is general agreement among FAO decentralised offices over the strategic framework and the SOs in the regional and country offices. However, this understanding is not automatically present among FAO counterparts in the countries, even though the Strategic Framework has been endorsed by members.
- 49 The Office of the Inspector General reviewed the implementation of the Strategic Framework in March 2015. Its main observations were that there is widespread support and engagement among internal stakeholders in key managerial roles. However, challenges were identified in the following areas that called for further attention:
- Complexities in the results framework linkage between indicators and activities; absence of indicators or difficulties in measuring results;
  - Matrix management structure and related accountability issues, and supervisory jurisdiction of SOCs over technical staff contributing to SOs;
  - Lack of clarity on prioritisation of activities within the Strategic Framework;
  - Multiple monitoring and results reporting frameworks;
  - Skill gaps in some thematic areas (social protection in case of SO3).

- 50 These were reiterated in the evaluation team's discussions with the SP3 team and regional focal points.

#### **4.1 Issues for the evaluation**

- 51 The evaluation recognizes that change management is a complex and time-consuming process, and issues are to be expected in these initial stages of implementing the new Strategic Framework. FAO has addressed some of these issues, particularly with the unified results reporting and monitoring framework, and the new implementation structure with a more frontal role for SOCs – renamed as Strategic Programme Leaders with their delivery teams in the decentralised structure. In view of these changes, the evaluation will focus more on the programme delivery and results chain, while taking on board any observations made in field missions and interviews with key stakeholders on the process issues linked to the transition phase of 2014-15.
- 52 However, the evaluation would like to obtain the perceptions and inputs of external stakeholders – national counterparts, key donors and partners – regarding their understanding, expectations and concerns on the new Strategic Framework and the SOs, and the results framework used for the SOs. This is because these stakeholders will also be involved in outcome level accountability. In this regard, the evaluation should assess the extent to which countries see DRE and SP as key pillars of the poverty reduction strategy, and the extent to which they see FAO as a key partner in these areas. This will have repercussions in future programme design and allocations based on a common shared understanding of FAO's scope to support in these areas.

## 5. Partnerships

53 This section seeks to answer the following questions.

<b>Quality of partnerships</b>
What is FAO's strategy on partnerships to attain the goals of its Strategic Objectives?
What are the key partnerships contributing toward SO3 outcomes?
What is the intensity and quality of these partnerships at the formulation, implementation, dissemination and advocacy, and results monitoring level?

- 54 Partnerships are at the heart of FAO's strategy to achieve its corporate vision. FAO has signed a large number and range of partnerships with United Nations organizations; Rome-based agencies (IFAD, WFP and CGIAR); regional and sub-regional institutions; donors, international financial institutions and regional development banks; private sector; and civil society organizations. Partnerships are guided by the organization-wide Strategy on Partnerships, drawing on the principles of mutuality, effectiveness, comparative advantage, flexibility, neutrality and impartiality.
- 55 There are six main areas of collaboration: policy dialogue; normative work; technical and field programmes; advocacy and communication; joint use and mobilization of resources; and knowledge sharing; and two main levels of interaction: global level and decentralized level. The Corporate Partnerships and United Nations Relations Branch of the FAO Office for Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development acts as the organizational focal point at the policy level, for United Nations system matters, and for international and regional development institutions. The Partnerships and Advocacy Branch is responsible for developing and strengthening partnerships with non-state actors.
- 56 The SP3 management provided a comprehensive list of ongoing and 'under-formulation' partnerships under SO3, grouped geographically and by outputs. The key partnerships are summarised in Table 10. In all, 80 partnerships have been listed, of which 10 are in the dialogue stage or have not been assigned any specific outcomes. Of the 70 active partnerships, 30 are in Outcome 3.1, 27 in Outcome 3.2, and 13 in Outcome 3.3.
- 57 Although the list is long, it does not provide an insight into the intensity and scale of the individual partnerships, which will need to be explored further to prioritise a list of partners to be taken up for more detailed assessments of the effectiveness of these partnerships, and future potential in emerging/promising areas. The selection will be made from various groupings: inter-governmental and development agencies; regional bodies; donors and development partners; private not-for-profit institutions; and academia; and the list will be in consultation with the Strategic Programme Leader.
- 58 The following are of prima facie interest to the study of the impact of partnerships in attaining the objectives of SO3: IFAD, World Bank, ILO, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UNCDF, WFP, DFID, ACP Sect; bodies/ forums such as: UN Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, Inter Agency network on Youth Development, Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, International Partnership on Cooperation in Child Labour in Agriculture, PCCLA, International policy Centre on Inclusive Growth, and Social Protection Inter Agency Cooperation Board; and African Platform for Social Protection, CABFIN, AFRACA APRACA, NENARACA and ALIDE.

**Table 1:** Key partnerships under SO3

Institution	Major areas
<b>IFAD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership with the rural finance and markets groups within the PTA (technical division) in IFAD. Funding for policy research, design and delivery of training programs, and web-based knowledge management (<a href="http://www.ruralfinanceandinvestment.org">www.ruralfinanceandinvestment.org</a>) under CABFIN partnership.</li> <li>• UN Women, IFAD and WFP implement a UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment: Accelerating Progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women.</li> <li>• Collaboration for the facilitation of the African regional consultation to finalize the Legal Guide on Contract Farming, a FAO/IFAD/UNIDROIT joint product. Collaboration to integrate social dimensions of contract farming potential for smallholder farmers, especially decent work/child labour aspects. Joint rural youth programmes: i) FAO-IFAD youth employment in 9 Caribbean States and ii) FAO-IFAD Joint design of Mozambique national youth incubation programme.</li> </ul>
<b>ILO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint partners in the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth; joint activities on youth employment at regional and country levels.</li> <li>• Collaboration with the ILO International Training Centre (ITC) in the delivery of courses, including first Academy on Decent Work in the Rural Economy (Oct 2015), masters such as MALED and other trainings (e.g. on child labour in agriculture)</li> <li>• Joint country work (CLAP - DRC/Mali/Lebanon) and joint-capacity development work at global, regional and country level. Normative work, policy dialogue (e.g. DRE Tool kit, CLAP) and joint country activities on policy dialogue (expansion of social security to rural workers) in Malawi, Zambia Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan.</li> </ul>
<b>World Bank</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CABFIN: Partnership between the rural finance technical units at FAO, World Bank, GIZ, and UNCDF. FAO acts as the coordinator of the joint agenda, which has facilitated trust funds to do policy research, capacity development and knowledge management in close collaboration with other partners.</li> </ul>
<b>WFP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Women, IFAD and WFP implement a UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment: Accelerating Progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women.</li> </ul>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNICEF has been a key partner for PtoP impact assessments in 7 Sub-Saharan countries through the Transfer Project. UNICEF is also a key partner in policy dialogue at country level in Ethiopia, Lesotho, Zambia, Malawi.</li> </ul>
<b>UN Women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Women, IFAD and WFP implement a UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment: Accelerating Progress towards economic empowerment of rural women</li> </ul>
<b>IPCCLA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA) was created in 2007 and has the following members: ILO, FAO, IFAD, IFPRI/CGIAR, and IUF. Focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote cooperation between agriculture and labour stakeholders and ensure coherence of policies and programmes on child labour prevention.</li> <li>• Promote youth employment opportunities in agriculture.</li> <li>• Integrate child labour concerns in the programming of activities of agricultural and labour organizations.</li> <li>• Promote the adoption of safer agricultural practices and prevent children from carrying out hazardous work in agriculture.</li> <li>• Improve rural livelihoods and income-generating activities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>SPIAC-B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation to the coordination mechanism, and contribution to the initiative on Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) tools, leading one working group for the development of a tool to assess social protection programmes in terms of their contribution to food security and nutrition outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>UNIA TFSSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAO currently chairs the TFSSE, which was created in 2013. The TFSSE. Members include: ECLAC, ESCWA, FAO, ILO, OECD, TDR, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UN-NGLS, UNRISD, UN Women, WHO and WFP. In this framework, FAO (LOG) initiated a partnership through an LOA with UNRISD in 2015 to conduct background research and a methodology to assess the potential of SSE and measure its socioeconomic and environmental impacts of SSE.</li> </ul>

Institution	Major areas
<b>ASP TRG</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The multi-agency group includes the African Institute for Health and Development (AIHD), the Africa Platform for Social Protection (APSP), the African Union (AU), New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), ILO and the World Bank. It has provided technical and political support to Influence policy, programming and operational thinking among governments, development agencies, donors and civil society on the linkages between social protection and agriculture. Activities that have been successfully implemented in the past biennium and are ongoing in the current one for strengthening coordination between social protection and agricultural policies and programmes are the regional workshop in South Africa in 2014 and the validation and uptake of the Framework for Analysis and Action (FAA).</li> </ul>
<b>AFRACA APRACA NENARACA ALIDE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These are the regional associations of agricultural finance institutions in Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Latin America. They unite the most relevant public and private financial institutions with a mandate to work in the agricultural sector and target smallholder families. They are critical allies in serving as a convener of critical local stakeholder for many of FAO projects, gathering not only financial institutions but also producer organizations and local agribusinesses.</li> </ul>

## 5.1 Issues for the evaluation

59 The evaluation seeks to analyse the following aspects regarding the selection of partnerships:

- The purpose, scope and structure of partnerships, and how they support SO3 and complement FAO's skills and strengths;
- Common and shared understanding of the Strategic Objectives;
- Flagship products developed under the partnerships;
- Evidence of joint planning and implementation of activities and nature/ emphasis of activities under the six areas of partnership;
- Importance of resource mobilisation/ contributions by FAO partners;
- Mutual assessments of partnership quality and avenues for improvement.

## 6. Achievement of results

### 6.1 Programme achievements

60 This section seeks to answer the following questions.

<b>Feasibility of results</b>
Has the programme already produced tangible results?
Are the results of the programme verifiable based on the planned collection systems?

- 61 The long planning cycle in 2014-2015 resulted in a shorter implementation period (18 months, according to some staff). The latest updated IMIS data (February 2016) shows the total drawdown of regular and extra budgetary funds at USD 140 million, against the budget of USD 164 million, representing a delivery rate of 85.3% of the work plan. Delivery was composed of USD 79 million of resource partner and USD 61 million in extra budgetary resources, which reflects FAO's strong reliance on its own resources for delivering the SO3 work plan.
- 62 According to the monitoring dashboards, there was a high level of completion of activities across outputs, measured in terms of the number of countries/ institutions supported under the respective outputs. In several cases, the actual delivery was far higher than targeted. However, these metrics do not provide adequate insights as to the effect of FAO's support for transforming the policy environment or technical capacities of the beneficiary countries and institutions. There is sufficient indication, however, that completion levels of the work plan are sufficiently high across the three outcomes to be examined for results.
- 63 Based on the results available for 2014, of 10 outputs there was good progress on seven outputs; moderate progress on two (3.3.1 - design and implementation of social protection systems, and 3.1.4 – rural services for rural poor); and one output was off track (3.1.5 - policy support at institutional or organizational services). The modest results under social protection are linked to it being a relatively new area of work for FAO, and it was felt necessary to strengthen key partnerships, improve resource mobilization and enhance staff capacity to obtain results across countries. However, there was an acceleration of delivery in 2015, and the latest data on PIREs indicates good progress on nine outputs, although a continued lag in output 3.1.5.
- 64 The results tracking module on PIREs shows the results by country for each output, based on the answers to three or four qualifying questions, as illustrated below for Output 3.1.1. A country is considered qualified for an output only when there is partial or full achievement reported for each question. The SP3 team members observed that this criterion is i) too inflexible and tends to underreport achievements; and ii) is not uniformly applied to all SOs, and thus does not offer a reliable comparison of FAO's performance across the five SOs.
- 65 Two additional important influences on the results reporting have been: the lack of any SO3 regional initiatives (which are an important delivery mechanism for FAO) in both Africa and Asia Pacific; and the inaccurate capture of relevant SO3 activities under other SOs, especially SO1 and SO2. This was due to the apportionment as judged by the FAORs, and also partly due to the absence of SO3 regional initiatives and thus capturing results under other SOs.

**Table 2:** Illustration of results qualifier questions for SO3 Output 3.1.1

Country	Qualification: Included/excluded	Result
	Q1. Tools developed or knowledge generated and disseminated on the design and implementation of successful approaches for strengthening rural organizations and empowering the rural poor.	Fully/partly/not achieved
	Q2. Policy advice provided, or policy dialogue has taken place with FAO support, on inclusive rural organizations and empowering the rural poor.	
	Q3. Technical support provided to ARD sectors' stakeholders for the formulation, implementation or monitoring of interventions and programmes aimed at fostering the emergence of inclusive rural organizations and empowering the rural poor.	
	Q4. Capacity building support provided to members of formal and informal rural organizations, institutions or government related to: i) organizational development; ii) good governance; iii) innovative participatory communication approaches aimed at empowering rural men and women.	

Source: FAO Intranet- Results Monitoring, compiled by the evaluation team

- 66 Based on the information received, the evaluation team concurs that there has been sufficient level of implementation/ delivery to assess output-level results in the countries that have reported outputs. Discussions with the SO3 team have highlighted a list of countries in which specific, concrete positive developments can be observed for 2014-15, and these will be considered in the criteria for selecting countries for detailed assessments in the evaluation.

**Table 3:** Countries reporting results for 2014-2015 (one or more outputs)

Africa 20	Angola, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.
Asia 9	China, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam.
ECA 7	Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan.
LAC 9	Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay.
NENA 3	Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia.

Source: Compiled by the evaluation team from iMIS data and indicators monitoring reports

- 67 **Knowledge products:** As indicated earlier, the SP 3 team provided the evaluation team with a comprehensive listing of global knowledge products for 2014-15 and pipeline for 2016-17, segregated by outcome, and in case of Outcome 1, with indications of evidence of results at country level based on the uptake and use of the products.
- 68 Given that the Strategic Framework seeks to enhance the country level impact of knowledge products, the evaluation plans to make a selection of key knowledge products, tools and studies produced under the three outcomes and understand their contributions – as perceived by direct beneficiaries/recipients. The list produced for Outcome 3.1 includes a score indicating the potential (1-high, 2-medium, 3-low) for country level results of each knowledge product, as assessed by SP 3 management. The distribution for products is: 25- low potential, 23 - medium potential and 43 - high potential for country level results. In consultation with the SP 3 team, a selection will be made across all three categories to understand the factors influencing country level results. This will be particularly important for KPs that entailed relatively significant expenditures in development/ delivery. Also important would be to understand the consultative process and needs assessments preceding the ideation, planning and budgeting of KPs. Lastly, dissemination is an important factor determining the results KPs have in terms of policy influence. Therefore, an assessment of dissemination strategies of a selection of KPs will also be useful to the evaluation.
- 69 **Policy Reviews:** Influence on policy processes is a key result of FAO's work and is duly reflected in the results framework, as indicated by the number of countries in which

policy improvements have resulted in chosen intervention areas. For SO3, these were tracked using a Policy Review Matrix for each outcome. The matrix outlines the key policy documents related to the outcome and keeps track of key changes made to the same over time through updated versions or amendments. The team noted that baseline data was mapped for 22 countries – Outcome 3.1, 19 for Outcome 3.2, and 37 for Outcome 3.3. For Outcome 3.3, a second review was conducted for 20 additional countries. These appear in Table 7 below. The evaluation will make a selection from these matrices and ascertain specific contributions of SO3 that may have influenced or are likely to influence policies toward rural poverty reduction.

**Table 4:** Policy review matrix

Outcome	Countries for which data documents mapped
001 Baseline	22: Angola, Cameroon, Chad, DR Congo, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan, Armenia, Bolivia, Haiti, Jamaica, St Kitts, Egypt, Mauritania, Yemen, Sudan.
002 Baseline	19: Albania, Brazil, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Georgia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Macedonia, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Niger, Paraguay Senegal, Tunisia.
003 first review	37: Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, DR Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Armenia, Montenegro, Tajikistan, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Uruguay, Haiti, Jamaica, St Kitts, Egypt, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Yemen.
003 second review	20: Ethiopia, Ghana, Niger, Kenya, Senegal, Myanmar, Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Brazil, Moldova, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia.

Source: Compiled by ET from data provided by SP 3 management.

## 6.2 Monitoring framework

70 This section seeks to answer the following questions.

Indicators	
<b>Validity and reliability</b>	Are there valid indicators for each expected event (output, outcome and impact levels)? How SMART <sup>4</sup> are the objectives and the indicators? To what extent do indicators represent a necessary and sufficient set of performance markers for measuring achievement of results?
<b>Attribution</b>	Are the target results clearly ascribable/ attributable to SO3 interventions?

71 A comprehensive monitoring framework has been prepared for SO3, which provides guidance to FAO staff in monitoring SO3 in line with the new results-based framework. The Strategic Objectives are long-term development results that will guide the international community, countries and FAO in contributing to FAO's global goals. The Organizational Outcomes reflect the main programmatic areas of work, and reflect the changes in the country-level enabling environment needed to foster the achievement of the Strategic Objectives. Organizational Outcomes measure progress in commitments and capacities that countries put in place to achieve the SOs. Outputs are FAO's direct contributions – products, services supporting the Organizational Outcomes. These are fully attributable to FAO.

72 The Medium Term Work Plan outlines the monitoring framework for various levels of the results chain, including the allocation of responsibilities. Indicators have been set for each level: Output, Organizational Outcome and Strategic Objective, along with the corresponding data sources.

4 SMART criteria: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

**Table 5:** FAO monitoring framework for SO3

Result Level	Indicators
<b>Strategic Objective</b> SO3 3 Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in poverty headcount ratio at rural poverty line; absolute number of rural poor (WB)</li> <li>• Reduction in rural malnutrition prevalence- weight at age 5, stunting under age of 5, and depth of food deficit (FAO, WHO)</li> <li>• Under five mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, community health workers per thousand people (WHO)</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Outcomes</b> 3 outcomes, 4 indicators and 14 sub indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.1A. Number of countries using improved set of strategies, policies, guidelines, regulations and tools aiming to improve access by rural poor to productive resources, services and markets and promote sustainable management of natural resource base</li> <li>• 3.1B. Number of countries in which relevant rural organizations, government institutions and other stakeholders have enhanced their capacities to improve equitable access by rural poor to productive resources, services and markets and promote sustainable management of natural resource base</li> <li>• 3.2A Number of countries with improved set of policies, institutions and interventions aiming to generate decent rural employment including for women and youth</li> <li>• 3.3A Number of countries with improved social protection systems that link social protection with rural poverty reduction, food security and nutrition, and sustainable management of natural resources</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b> 10 outputs, 10 indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.1. Number of countries in which support was provided to create an enabling environment for rural organizations and institutions, as well as the empowerment of the rural poor</li> <li>• 1.2. Number of countries provided with support for the design, monitoring and implementation of approaches, policies and interventions that promote equitable access to, and sustainable management of productive natural resources</li> <li>• 1.3. Number of countries in which support was provided for the development and implementation of pro-poor, gender-sensitive knowledge, science and technologies for increased availability of food and better access to markets</li> <li>• 1.4. Number of countries in which support was provided for the design and implementation of policies and approaches promoting innovative, pro-poor and gender-sensitive rural services delivery systems and rural infrastructure models</li> <li>• 1.5. Number of countries or regional institutions provided with support for the design, implementation and monitoring of sustainable, inclusive and gender-equitable rural development policies and poverty reduction strategies models</li> <li>• 2.1. Number of countries in which assistance was provided for the drafting or revision of ARD policies, strategies and programmes to integrate Decent Rural Employment (DRE) principles as a central element or for the implementation of DRE programmes</li> <li>• 2.2. Number of countries in which assistance was provided to support the application of International Labour Standards in rural areas</li> <li>• 2.3. Number of knowledge products on DRE developed and disseminated</li> <li>• 3.1. Number of countries in which support was provided for improving the design and implementation of pro-poor, age- and gender-sensitive social protection systems that target rural populations</li> <li>• 3.2 Number of countries in which support was provided for improving capacities for monitoring social protection systems and their impact on rural poverty reduction</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by ET from Medium Term Plan 2014-2017 (Reviewed)

73 Indicators proposed for the SO level are: percentage of rural population below the rural poverty line, and poverty gap at the rural poverty line, based on international data sources. World Bank reports rural and urban poverty levels for all countries. Latest updates range from 2003 to 2014.

74 Discussions with the SP3 team and senior leadership revealed that mortality indicators are not linked directly to FAO's programmatic interventions, and only serve as a proxy for rural poverty levels, in the absence of hard data on rural poverty levels. It was clarified that the other SO level indicators – mortality and malnutrition – are surrogate indicators for rural poverty and can be used in case direct data on poverty is not available. In view of the World Bank data available on rural poverty, these may be redundant.

- 75 The evaluation team also made a preliminary analysis of rural poverty trends (World Bank data as of December 2015) in the 55 countries for which baseline assessments were made for SO3, and noted the range and diversity of rural poverty, to appreciate the magnitude of the challenge both in terms of geographic spread and depth.
- 76 Of the 55 countries, which include 36 SO3 focus countries, rural poverty levels ranged from 3% (Uruguay) to 84.3% (Zimbabwe). Of these, 16 countries reported notable reductions in rural poverty levels (reduction of more than 2% since last measured). Notable among these are: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chad, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Georgia, Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Nicaragua, Tajikistan, Uganda, Vietnam. On the other hand, poverty levels increased in nine countries since the last measurement, including in Albania, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Malawi.

### 6.3 Organisational outcome assessments

- 77 SO3's results monitoring seeks to provide an assessment of FAO's contribution to the reduction of rural poverty by member countries and their partners. Specifically, improvements in the enabling policy and legal framework in terms of:
- Equitable access by the rural poor to natural resources, rural services, institutions and representation in policy processes;
  - Capacities of rural institutions and organizations to promote sustainable management of natural resources, and enhanced access to resources, rural services, inputs and markets;
  - Policies, institutions and interventions aiming to generate decent rural employment;
  - Social protection systems that link better with rural poverty reduction.
- 78 Four indices have been adopted to track results under the three Organizational Outcomes, composed of qualitative and quantitative 14 sub-indicators measured by 33 questions. Indices are assigned values from 0 to 1, and grouped under five classes representing levels of implementation of the key policy areas: negligible (0-0.2) to high (0.8-1.0). Organizational Outcome level results are to be collected thrice over the MTP 2014-17, one for the baseline, one for the mid-term, and one final measurement. Data is collected from primary and secondary sources, the primary sources being: expert opinion surveys (structured questionnaires) and FAO representations.
- 79 The respondents for SO3 are senior staff from: Ministry of Agriculture (relevant departments to be selected by FAOR); Ministry of Labour; Ministry of Youth; Ministry of Social Welfare or Gender and Social Affairs; ILO, WFP or UNICEF; GEF or main donor agency financing NRM programmes; farmer's associations/cooperatives, rural women's associations, and NGOs involved in land and water management.
- 80 Organizational Outcome surveys seek to measure progress in commitment and capacities countries put in place to reduce rural poverty with an integrated approach across six policy areas:
- Voice and empowerment;
  - Access to productive assets and resources;
  - Access to rural infrastructure and basic services;
  - Access to markets;
  - Decent employment generation;
  - Social protection programmes (Coverage? Quality? Capacity to implement?).
- 81 In 2014, a Corporate Baseline Assessment was made for 48 to 55 countries covering four SOs (excluding SO4), using a comprehensive questionnaire, the results of which are available in the form of baseline scores against the four indices. In 2016, a follow-up Corporate Outcome Assessment was created to track progress during the biennium. The draft results were made available to the evaluation team and provide a timely and useful input.

- 82 The key results of the COA-II and the comparison with the CBA (in terms of difference in the indicator scores between the CBA and COA) were reviewed for the 49 countries for which comparative information is available for SO3. Changes in Indicator Scores between Baseline and COA-II for the 49 comparable countries:
- SO3 OO1.1: The indicator scores between the baseline and end 2015 improved meaningfully (gain of 0.10 or more) for one country, worsened for 15 countries and remained unchanged for 33 of the 49 comparable countries.
  - SO3 OO1.2: The indicator scores between the baseline and end 2015 improved meaningfully (gain of 0.10 or more) for 13 countries, worsened for 15 countries and remained unchanged for 21 comparable countries.
  - SO3 OO2.1: The indicator scores improved meaningfully for eight countries, worsened for 16 countries and remained unchanged for 25 countries.
  - SO3 OO 3.1: The indicator scores between the baseline and end 2015 improved meaningfully for 12 countries, worsened for 20 countries and remained unchanged for 17 countries.
- 83 FAO Contribution to the change from 2014-2016:
- SO3 OO1.1: FAO contributed significantly to 31 countries, and moderately to 74 countries of the 148 in which it has activities.
  - SO3 OO1.2: FAO contributed significantly to 33 countries, and moderately to 53 countries of the 148 in which it has activities.
  - SO3 OO 2.1: FAO contributed significantly to 22 countries, and moderately to 72 countries of the 148 in which it has activities.
  - SO3 OO 3.1: FAO contributed significantly to 37 countries, and moderately to 37 countries of the 148 in which it has activities.
- 84 The following countries showed the most significant difference (change of more than 0.1) in scores between CBA and COA-II:
- SO3 OO1.1: Positive: Saudi Arabia; Negative: Cook Islands, St Kitts and Nevis;
  - SO3 OO1.2: Positive: Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Georgia, Ghana, Haiti, Indonesia, Lebanon, Montenegro, Saudi Arabia; Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Negative: Cook Islands, Madagascar, Moldova, Myanmar, Pakistan, Tuvalu, Vietnam;
  - SO3 OO 2.1: Positive: Angola, Armenia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Jamaica, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia; Sierra Leone, Somalia; Negative: Egypt, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Macedonia, St Kitts and Nevis, South Africa, Tuvalu;
  - SO3 OO 3.1: Positive: Angola, Cambodia, Cameroon, Ghana, Indonesia, Moldova, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Vietnam, Zambia; Negative: Ethiopia, Niger, South Africa, Tuvalu.
- 85 The Corporate Outcome Assessment (2016) survey data was collected through a structured questionnaire and thus designed for aggregation. However, the qualitative narrative substantiating the respondent's assessment of the score is not available. This limits its utility to answer the SO3 evaluation's key questions. It would be useful for the evaluation team to receive aggregated or sanitised conclusions with respect to a few questions. This would avoid duplication, and the evaluation could probe deeper into qualitative aspects with the beneficiaries, to understand how subsequent work plans can be designed and delivered more effectively toward rural poverty reduction. One aspect to be reconciled with the COA team is that the COA charts indicate FAO contributions as moderate to significant for more countries than for which results have been claimed for 2014-15 in PIREs. In some cases, these exceed the number of countries in which activities were undertaken. Another aspect to be reconciled is the variation between the COA results and the results listed under PIREs (see Table 8).

**Table 6:** Countries reporting results for 2014-2015, by output

Output	Countries in which 2014-15 outputs were reported
3.1.1	Angola, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia
3.1.2	Ghana, China, Lao PDR, Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, Lebanon
3.1.3	Angola, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Liberia, Swaziland, Uganda, Cambodia, China, Maldives, Pakistan, Montenegro, Tajikistan, Paraguay, Morocco, Tunisia
3.1.4	Angola, Uganda, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Panama
3.1.5	Ghana, Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Mexico
3.2.1	Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Swaziland, Zambia, Nepal, Cuba
3.2.2	Malawi, Niger, Tanzania, Zambia, Cambodia
3.2.3	Not applicable: Products- not countries
3.3.1	Ghana, Lesotho, Zambia
3.3.2	Ghana, Lesotho, Mexico

Source: Compiled from PIREs by the evaluation team

## 6.4 Observations on indicators

86 The evaluation team noted that several indicators for SDG 1, 2, 5, 8 and 10 are directly relevant to and better reflect the results under SO3 outcomes, and could be incorporated into the results matrix. The following indicators in particular are useful and germane to FAO's outcome areas:

- Percentage of women, men, indigenous peoples and local communities with secure rights to land, measured by (i) percentage with documented rights to land, and (ii) percentage who perceive their rights are recognized and protected;
- Improved tenure security and governance of forests (SDG indicator yet to be developed);
- Employment to population ratio by gender and age group 15-49;
- Youth employment rate, formal and informal;
- Percentage of young people not in education, employment or training;
- Gender gap in wages by sector of economic activity;
- Average number of hours spent on paid and unpaid work combined (total work burden), by gender;
- Percentage of eligible population covered by national social protection programmes.

87 A part of SO3's work is to develop and strengthen information and data collection systems to enable gender and age-disaggregated data on employment, tenure rights and social protection coverage. It would be useful to design these systems to be able to collect and report on the above indicators, which are now globally endorsed as part of the SDG framework. The evaluation team notes that these indicators are also practical and more concrete, and thus supplement the current outcome indicators which measure progress on the supply side (policies, programmes, institutions) rather than results in the hands of the final beneficiaries.

## 6.5 Issues for the evaluation

88 There appears to be a need for qualitatively richer assessments of FAO's influence on policies and capacity development, beyond numerical survey assessments. The results reporting templates could provide more information on the specific interventions that have borne results or are finding traction among policy makers and other key stakeholders, and a narrative built across successive biennia, in order to provide a more useful insight into the engagement with the change process, the milestones attained over time.

- 89 FAO indicators only consist of number of countries supported. However, there are more direct, periodically tracked indicators for rural employment and social protection, which could also be enlisted in the results framework. At least in the focus countries, FAO should be able to demonstrate concrete improvements by 2019-2020 in terms of: youth employment rate, formal and informal; gender gap in wages by sector of economic activity; and percentage of eligible population covered by national social protection programmes, which are core results of Outcomes 3.2 and 3.3 respectively.

## 7. Evaluation design

90 This section seeks to answer the following questions.

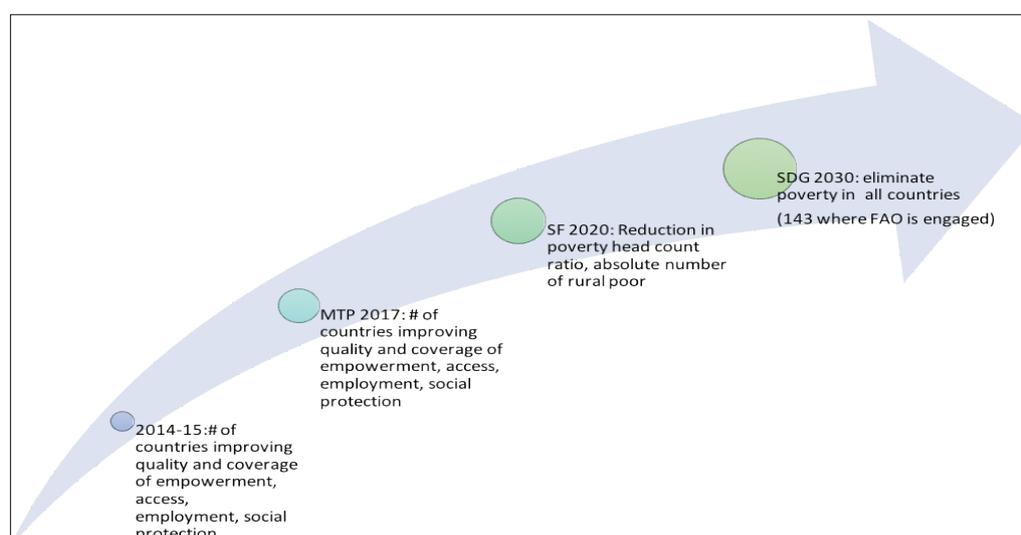
<b>Design</b>
What can be meaningfully evaluated/ useful to evaluate?
What are the expectations of stakeholders from the evaluation?
What is the methodology to select countries and projects for sampling?

### 7.1 What would be useful and meaningful to evaluate

91 The evaluation's objective, as formulated in the terms of reference, is to assess FAO's contributions to rural poverty reduction and identify lessons learned, gaps and best practices that could enhance the poverty reduction effects of various strands of FAO's work. From a timeline standpoint, the present evaluation comes closer to a Mid Term Evaluation of the 2014-2017 Medium Term Plan, and an early pointer to the likelihood of attaining the Reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-2019 as measured by rural poverty rates, headcounts and poverty gaps in 2020-2021. The line of sight can be further projected to the corresponding targets for SDG 1 (elimination of poverty everywhere by 2030), which implies from an SO3 standpoint, the elimination of rural poverty in the 143 countries where FAO is engaged. See Fig 3.

92 Some guiding questions for the SO3 evaluation are:

- (How) has FAO's work/ approach to rural poverty reduction improved under the new Strategic Framework architecture? Is the intervention as planned still relevant, logical and adequate vis-à-vis member country and partners' needs and demands?
- Is there a shared understanding, endorsement and commitment to FAO's intervention logic among FAO decentralised units, country counterparts, and development partners?
- Is the SO3 approach – characterised by initiatives that focus on access and empowerment, rural employment and social protection – showing signs of results in the form of institutional change, improved policy frameworks and enhanced resource allocations?
- Are country level activities of sufficient scale to produce lasting results? Is there requisite funding for SO3 to meet the needs expressed by countries?
- Are the SOs being delivered synergistically in countries that have interrelated SOs?
- If FAO continues its present approach and scale, by 2019-20 (at the end of the Strategic Framework horizon), how many and which countries will achieve concrete results as reflected by: a drop in absolute poverty numbers and the rural poverty ratio?



**Figure 3:** Line of sight: MTP results, SF targets, and SDGs source: ET

- 93 However, as one of the first evaluations of the SOs (preceded only by SO5), the SO3 evaluation is also intended to provide insights into the Strategic Framework architecture in terms of:
- After revisiting/validating the conceptual framework behind the adoption of SO3, the evaluation can ask whether and how the decentralised structure and counterpart stakeholders in countries are interpreting and adapting to the new way of working, as well as to the results framework.
  - Whether and how the new approach of the Strategic Framework is delivering or has the potential to deliver better results on the ground at the country level.
  - Whether and how the SOs are synergistic in their impact on rural poverty reduction. Whether and how the whole is equal to or greater than the sum of its parts.
- 94 While there appears to be a high degree of familiarisation of the Strategic Framework within FAO's decentralised units, it is not known how many national counterparts understand and co-own the Strategic Framework and its results framework. SO3's themes, particularly Social Protection and Rural Employment, are domains that extend beyond the usual counterpart – the Ministry of Agriculture. Even within FAO, skill gaps need to be closed in some of these areas, in order to engage effectively in evidence-based policy processes. Thus, the SO3 evaluation can gather insights on how conversant the national counterparts are with the themes of SO3, while formulating their requests of FAO and their own strategies to address their challenges of poverty hunger and food insecurity, and specific priorities toward rural poverty reduction.
- 95 The measurement of rural poverty reduction calls for the development or adaptation of tools and data, and the building or reinforcement of information systems. This will require an enduring commitment as well as institutional resources to build, update and monitor information systems and statistics to inform policies on rural development and poverty reduction.
- 96 Another important aspect this evaluation could examine is whether there are advantages of an integrated approach (SO-wide and multiple SO coverage) over itemised, menu-type interventions for individual outputs. The SO3 evaluation has an opportunity to compare the results in a sample of countries that have a more uniform coverage of all SOs, against those having only one or two SOs. This will also provide useful inputs for donors to consider a Strategic Framework-wide funding, rather than funding select SOs, outcomes and outputs based on their own criteria.
- 97 Discussions with FAO staff revealed a range of expectations from the SO3 evaluation design, which have been summarised in the box below. Also important is the briefing exit note prepared by the former Strategic Programme Leader, which throws light on implementation issues that need to be addressed. The main points in the note are:
- Results were achieved in more countries than envisaged; however, many country-level results were achieved through extra budgetary-funded projects.
  - Several results were achieved through small, isolated operations without prospects for scaling up and lasting impacts.
  - A major drawback was that in RAF and RAP, where rural poverty is concentrated, regional offices did not prioritise SO3-oriented Regional Initiatives.
  - Looking ahead, there needs to be: alignment with the SDGs; consolidation of activities to ensure lasting impact; critical review of focus/target countries; greater focus on country-level policy support; shift of resources to social protection, rural employment and rural women's empowerment; access to productive resources and rural institutions.
  - Challenges to be addressed include: skill gaps, especially for support to social protection, rural employment and rural institutions for implementation through decentralised offices; fragmentation and sub-scale interventions; insufficient leveraging of cross-SO synergies; communications; resource mobilisation; and lack of steady focal point for resource mobilization.

**Box 4.** Key expectations from the evaluation

- Alignment of the SDGs, Strategic Framework, Regional Initiatives and CPFs;
- Effectiveness of the SF/SO as a delivery mechanism – Regional Initiatives in particular?
- How to accelerate delivery and country level results?
- Are resource allocations well directed to serve the SOs?
- How can inter-and intra-regional experiences and lessons be shared effectively?
- Validation of the theory of change and results chain – does it make sense?
- How is SO3 contributing to country plans to reduce poverty?
- How are FAO partnerships (Rome-based and in countries) delivering results for SO3?
- How are FAO's partners and beneficiaries using the knowledge products?
- How embedded are FAO projects into the key national/ regional umbrella programmes?
- Are we heading in the right direction?
- Comparative advantages of FAO;
- Appropriateness of the delivery structure;
- Effectiveness of integrated approaches (intra- and inter-SO);
- Indicators and evidence of institutional change;
- Fragmentation and scalability of projects/ activities;
- Skill gaps in new thematic areas;
- FAORs skills and leadership of policy changes in new thematic areas;
- Qualitative utility of the Results Monitoring Framework;
- Resource leverage, mobilization and strategic partnerships;
- Rationale and criteria for Regional Initiatives (absence of SO3 in RAF and RAP);
- Results reporting: attribution to SO and narrative quality;
- Case for multi-SO Regional Initiatives;
- Addressing skills gaps in rural institutional development and social protection.

**7.2 Where to evaluate**

- 98 The evaluability assessment has highlighted the need to base the evaluation on progress towards improving the enabling factors to achieve results at country level. Therefore, a sample of countries and specific projects will be selected for a deeper analysis of the results under SO3. FAO delivers most of its work under its SO Action Plans through projects, which can be classified in two ways: i) Geographic: global, inter-regional, regional, subregional and country projects; and ii) by funding source: regular programme (TCP funded), and extra budgetary (donor funded). According to the FAO Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) database, there are 186 distinct projects contributing to SO3 outputs, with a total delivery of USD 62 million during 2014-2015. These include 19 global projects, 14 inter-regional projects, 17 regional projects, 14 sub-regional projects and 85 national projects.
- 99 The evaluation team used the following sampling criteria as relevant and appropriate for the selection of countries for field missions:
- Countries with SO3 activities: 90 (as per PIREs/FPMIS);
  - Countries counted qualifying for 2014-15 results: 48;
  - Countries covered by SO3 Regional Initiatives: 24;
  - Focus countries: 2016-17: 36;
  - Super focus countries: 2016-17: 7;
  - Countries for which Corporate Baseline Assessments exist: 55;
  - Countries for which Corporate Outcome Assessments made in 2016: 51;
  - Countries recommended by SO3 team: 30;
  - Countries with 4 or 5 SOs: 16;
  - Countries targeting 2016 results: 32;

- 100 Based on the data under each criterion, and also including certain countries important from a partnership perspective, the preliminary list of countries for more detailed studies could include:
- Asia: Cambodia, Viet Nam, Bangladesh and Myanmar (India and China could also be studied);
  - Latin America and the Caribbean: Bolivia, Paraguay, El Salvador, Colombia and Guatemala (Mexico and Brazil could also be studied);
  - Africa: Senegal, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi and Niger (Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya could also be studied);
  - Near East: Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt (Sudan could also be studied);
  - Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Tajikistan, Georgia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.
- 101 The final selection will be informed by the evaluation calendar for 2016, in order to avoid duplication and to secure synergies with ongoing evaluations.



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