



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Policy Engagement & Theory of Change

Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policies II
(MAFAP II)



MAFAP

Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policies

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Introduction

FAO is initiating the second phase of its Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policies (MAFAP) program, to be implemented from today until 2019. During the first phase of the program, implemented between 2009 and 2013, FAO worked with governments and national policy research institutes in ten African countries to create a consistent set of analyses assessing the effect of policy on prices in countries' key agricultural value chains and on public expenditure. In addition, FAO developed national capacity to institutionalize policy monitoring in national institutions, promoting evidence-based policymaking that is conducive to agricultural development.

The quantitative and coherent ex-post analysis of policy effects provides important evidence on policy-motivated and structural disincentives, national policy inconsistencies, public expenditure misallocations, and market distortions, which constrain the achievement of national and international agricultural development goals.

In Phase II, MAFAP will move beyond the (ex-post) analysis alone. Based on partner governments' policy priorities, commitments and demand, and building on inclusive policy dialogue, it will support governments in developing countries to articulate alternative policy reform options and analyze the costs and benefits of reform, so that governments are better placed to assess and approve policy changes based on reliable and relevant evidence.

At the same time, FAO recognizes that policy change does not take place in a vacuum, nor do reform processes generally follow a pattern of linear change. For that reason, FAO will consistently use tools for political economy analysis to support its policy engagement. Where appropriate, it will seek partnerships with sector stakeholders, including the private sector, producers' organizations, NGOs and donors. As a result, MAFAP II will follow a strategy that is based on both internal (government and related agencies) and external (other sector stakeholders) engagement. This document sets out the pathway of expected change processes that will allow MAFAP to achieve its program outcomes and long-term impact.

➤ MAFAP II Theory of Change

Page 6 contains a graphical overview of the Theory of Change (ToC) of MAFAP II. The ToC should be read as a hypothesis of the processes that MAFAP II will follow to achieve its outcomes of policy reform and improved national policy monitoring capacity. The ToC is not a static framework; during implementation of MAFAP II, monitoring and evaluation of the program's policy influence will be documented and will provide lessons from experience on the stages in which vested stakeholder interests or institutional barriers prevent change from happening or, on the contrary, highlight the factors that made a positive outcome possible. Those lessons will help the MAFAP team to engage more effectively with government partners and sector stakeholders in participating countries to improve the policy framework

The ToC sets out the change process from initial input (data collected on prices, costs and budgetary expenditures, improved capacities) to the long-term impact of a more enabling policy environment for agricultural development and food security. The red path represents the key steps that lead to the second outcome of MAFAP (policy monitoring capacity in partner countries strengthened), while the blue path sets out the main elements of change towards the approval of targeted policy reforms. Since the latter constitutes a new area of work compared to the first phase of MAFAP, the focus of the ToC is on this path.

Assumptions

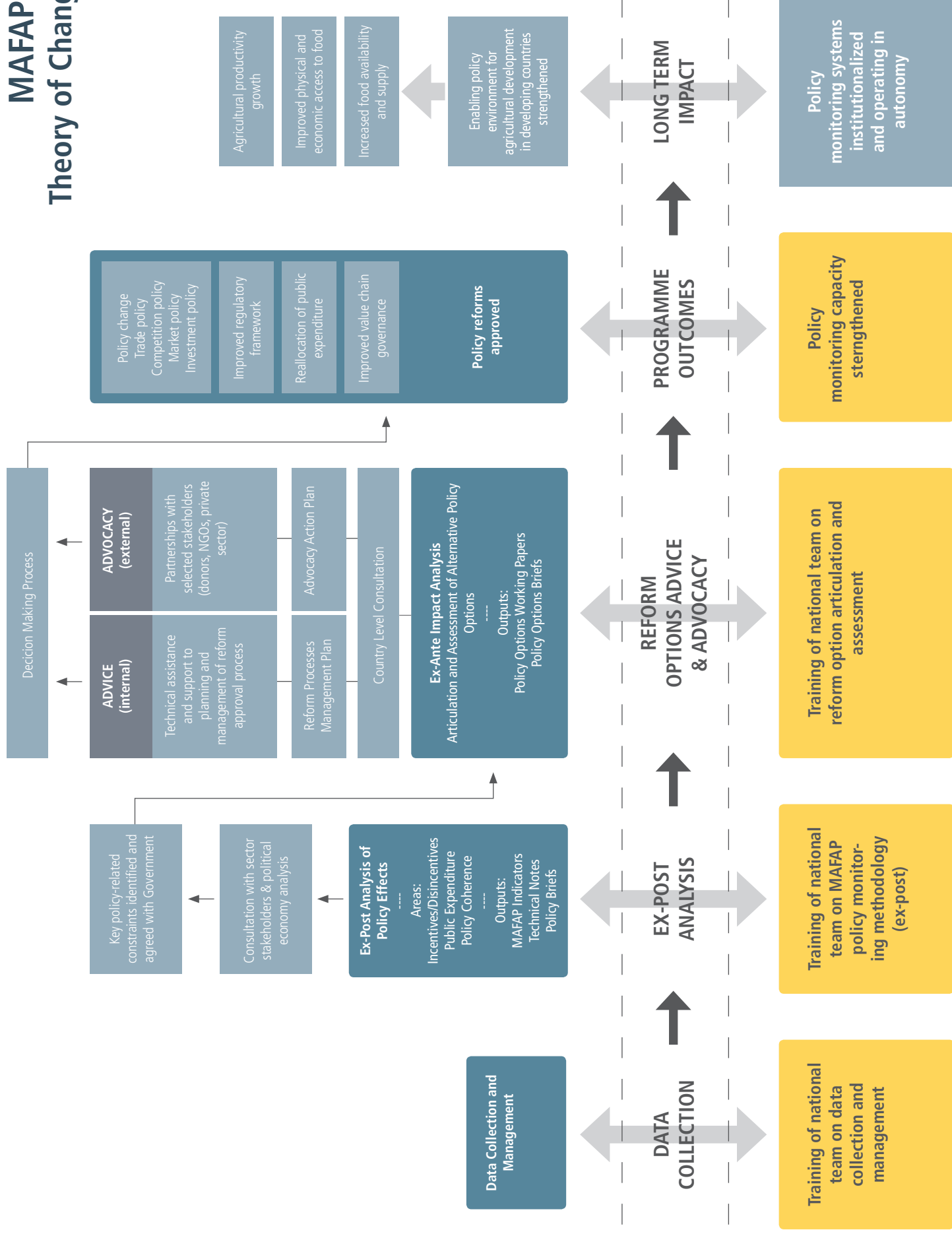
The Theory of Change for MAFAP II is based on the following assumptions:

1. A more enabling policy environment for agricultural development and food security is achieved through an evidence-based, coherent and transparent policy framework, of which national institutions that possess technical and institutional policy monitoring capacity sustainably measure the effects.
2. A more evidence-based and coherent national agricultural policy framework requires targeted reforms in different policy areas, including trade policy, market policies, investment policy, competition policy, agriculture budget allocations and the regulatory framework.
3. Successful policy reform is the outcome of a complex and multi-faceted decision-making process with both an inside (Government and related agencies) and outside (other stakeholders) track.

4. Influencing the internal track requires an approach of 'advice', while influencing the external track requires 'advocacy'. These approaches require a sound understanding of the political economy to be effective.
5. Both advice and advocacy need to be based on evidence with thorough ex-post identification of policy "problems" and ex-ante impact analysis on the costs and benefits of various options for reform of a given policy. While policy advice is a process targeted to government itself, building on mutual trust between the advisor and the advisee, advocacy is an external process building on stakeholders' mobilization capacity to reach a critical mass of reform supporters.
6. The selection and prioritization of potential policies to be reformed needs to be the result of a consultative and inclusive process and should be validated by the government.
7. This consultative process should be based on results of MAFAP's ex-post analysis of policy effects on incentives/disincentives in key agricultural value chains, agricultural public expenditure and policy coherence
8. Stakeholders only take ex-post analytical results seriously if prepared in collaboration with national policy analysts and if based on a set of reliable and recent data on prices, costs and budgetary expenditures.

MAFAP II

Theory of Change



➤ Policy Engagement Approach

While from 2009 until 2013, MAFAP focused on the development of a methodology for policy monitoring in developing countries, building of capacity and production of a set of analyses on price incentives/disincentives, public expenditure and policy coherence in ten countries in Africa, the program will now step up its policy engagement by supporting government-led reform of policies that are constraining agricultural development.

This model requires a series of additional policy engagement activities, in particular to:

1. ascertain **government buy-in and commitment** to identify policy priorities, articulate and assess alternative policy options and ensure uptake of MAFAP results in policy processes;
2. understand the **political economy** around specific policy issues (linkages to CAADP and national agricultural strategies, formal and informal policy processes, key stakeholders) in order to provide timely, effective and influential advice and identify windows of opportunities for policy reforms;
3. identify and partner with external (non-government) **advocacy partners** to promote inclusive policy dialogue and reform processes.

To achieve those objectives, FAO will follow these steps for policy engagement:

Step 1. Ascertain Government Commitment

Collaboration with governments in partner countries will remain at the core of MAFAP's engagement approach. Therefore, obtaining government commitment and buy-in is essential. For that reason, FAO will present the MAFAP II approach to governments in its partner countries, and if government interest exists, anchor it in a formal agreement. This can take the form of a Letter of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with the main institutional partner (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture and/or Ministry of Finance).

Step 2. Understanding the Political Economy

In parallel to this process, the MAFAP Policy Advice & Advocacy Coordinator and the Country Focal point in the MAFAP Secretariat will jointly prepare the first part of the Policy Engagement Plan. This plan will be prepared using Policy Intelligence and Preparedness, which is FAO's

framework for political economy analysis. During the first stage, MAFAP will produce an overview of the main agricultural policy issues at stake in a given country, as indicated by the evidence of MAFAP analysis and by key sector stakeholders, in particular the members of the national team and representatives of government, donors and (smallholder) farmers. This first overview of policy issues constraining agricultural development will serve as the basis for the identification and prioritization of policy problems in Step 3.

Step 4. Analyze the political economy around prioritized policy problems

In order to assess the political feasibility of change in prioritized policy areas, FAO will update the Policy Engagement Plan by carrying out a more in-depth political economy analysis of the selected issues. At this stage, FAO will take stock of the main stakeholders and coalitions supporting and opposing specific issues, and draw conclusions on the windows of opportunity for change.

Step 5. Articulate and Assess Policy Options

In parallel with Step 4, FAO will, in collaboration with the MAFAP national team, initiate the articulation and assessment of the costs and benefits of alternative policy options by applying more specific ex-post and/or ex-ante impact analysis. This will result in a set of technical Policy Reform Working Papers and non-technical Policy Reform Briefs, which describe the costs and benefits of various policy reform options.

Step 6. Advice – Inside Track

Using the results of the ex-ante impact analysis, FAO will now work with the government to analyze the alternative policy reform options. Only if the government selects a reform option, FAO will provide technical assistance in areas of its mandate to support the preparation of the necessary policy documents or legislative texts all the way through to approval.

In support of its advisory role, the Country Focal Point in the MAFAP Secretariat, the Policy Advice & Advocacy Coordinator and Ex-Ante Impact Analysis Coordinator will jointly prepare a tailored reform process management plan for each specific policy issue, and which should serve as a roadmap for the policy process.

Step 7. Advocacy – Outside Track

In parallel, FAO will prepare a reform-specific Advocacy Action Plan, which will set out the political economy characteristics of the policy issue and list the potential stakeholders that MAFAP could collaborate with to influence the policy debate (e.g. donors, NGOs, producers organizations, private sector representatives etc.).

Based on this plan, it will partner with selected external stakeholders to promote the uptake of MAFAP evidence in the policy debate, for example through bilateral meetings, presentations or media outreach.

Step 8. Monitoring & Evaluation of Policy Influence

In order to assess whether the Theory of Change of MAFAP II is valid and the listed policy engagement activities are effective, MAFAP will monitor, document and evaluate its policy influence. However, it should be recognized that causal relationships between evidence and policy change may be difficult to establish, and that MAFAP II will operate in a highly fluid political environment.

Therefore, MAFAP will work with an organization that has well-recognized experience in M&E of policy influence (e.g. the Overseas Development Institute) to develop a number of tools to measure MAFAP's level of influence on the inside (advice) and outside (advocacy) tracks. This should allow MAFAP to draw lessons learned and adjust its policy engagement approach where necessary. It should also allow FAO to provide the funding partners of MAFAP with evidence on the program's performance to influence policy change in different countries and policy areas.

➤ References

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