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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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Real time Evaluation of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme - Phase 1

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

➢ Designed in July 2020, the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme (RRP) aims to enhance coordination of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) response to the crisis and its related resource mobilization. Conceived as an "umbrella programme", it includes a range of initiatives, projects and activities related to FAO's response in seven priority areas ranging from humanitarian response to long-term recovery and agri-food systems transformation.

➢ This interim report of the real time evaluation (RTE) identifies good practices and lessons learned emerging from programme implementation, specific to the humanitarian response and the provision of knowledge products and data services in support of recovery efforts within the COVID-19 pandemic context. These good practices and lessons learned are context specific and care must be taken not to generalize beyond the two topics examined (see annexes for the respective reports).

➢ Among the good practices, the RTE found that FAO's promptness in defining the strategic objectives and put in place processes to address emerging issues was key to provide an appropriate response to the crises. In addition, leveraging in-house expertise, networks and partnerships enhanced the outreach of FAO's efforts. Likewise, applying lessons from previous crises, such as from the Ebola virus outbreak, showed the need to anticipate and address the continuity of the food supply chain. Adopting measures that fostered collaboration resulted in improved coordination, planning and alignment of efforts within the Organization.

➢ Among the lessons learned, the RTE noted that a timely response is critical to increase the uptake of knowledge products by decision makers, and that linking "data for action" and "data for resilience outcomes" is required for humanitarian assistance to have sustainable results. Similarly, a systematic and nuanced understanding of the circumstances and needs of beneficiaries, in particular vulnerable groups is essential for adjusting interventions.

➢ The RTE advises that the identified good practices and lessons learned be considered and mainstreamed, when appropriate, by Management, technical teams and relevant offices into the Organization's workflows and processes, and future similar crisis/scenarios.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

➢ The Programme Committee is invited to review the contents of the document and provide guidance, as deemed appropriate.

I.   Background

1.   At its 129th session, the Programme Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) requested that the Office of Evaluation (OED) conduct a Real Time Evaluation (RTE) of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme (RRP). The RTE (see Annex 1 for the terms of reference) was launched at the end of January 2021 and covers FAO's COVID-19 responses that have been grouped under the Programme, from the onset of the pandemic to date, irrespective of budget source or geographic location. In the case of pandemic-related knowledge products and data services (KPDS), many of these preceded the start of the Programme but have been included in the scope of the RTE due to their significance.

2.   The real time evaluation assesses the progress made and provides feedback to foster organization-wide learning, inform decision-making and promote accountability. With this purpose in mind, the RTE adopted a consultative approach including creating core learning groups of key internal stakeholders to serve as a sounding board, validate findings and assist in the uptake of the good practices and lessons learned.

3.   As a first step of the RTE, a stocktaking study was conducted which identified four areas of focus to prioritise:

FOCUS	TOPIC	RTE Work plan
1. Programme design	• Reconstruct the Programme's theory of change	May–June 2021
2. Humanitarian response	• Lessons learned and good practices on providing humanitarian support in food crisis countries in the context of COVID-19	May–September 2021
3. Knowledge products and data services	• Lessons learned and good practices on development, dissemination and uptake of COVID-19 related knowledge products and services	May-September 2021
4. Programme results	• Contributions of FAO's Response and Recovery Programme (country studies)	October 2021–March 2022

4.   These areas of focus were selected because of their importance in addressing the initial response of the Organization and the subsequent RRP. Based on these areas of focus, the RTE implemented a rolling work plan consisting of distinct, complementary analytical or stand-alone evaluative exercises. This report covers the first three components described above. The findings on Programme results will be reported on next year.

II.   FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme

A. *Programme overview*

5.   FAO's response to the COVID-19 crisis has two phases: i) the "Immediate response phase" (March–June 2020); and ii) the "Transition and recovery phase" (July 2020 onwards). The launch of FAO's COVID-19 RRP marks the start of the second phase. Throughout these phases, FAO has strived to ensure business continuity and external coordination by establishing flexible and innovative mechanisms to facilitate programme and project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, some of which predate the pandemic. Appendix 1 includes a timeline of key milestones since the outbreak.

6.   During the first phase, two efforts stand out in FAO's response, both of which were mainstreamed into the RRP. The first was FAO's knowledge products and data services- work advocating for increased attention to the effects of COVID-19 in food security that led to a large range of materials being produced for a more-evidence based response. Among the actions undertaken, in early April 2020 FAO launched the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Portal, published several policy briefs and numerous guidance and reference documents. Likewise, international awareness activities were launched to prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis.

7.   The second was FAO's humanitarian response. The Organization contributed to the UN system's humanitarian response (Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, GHRP) which became the RRP's Priority Area 1 (see below). In this context, FAO has provided livelihood support to more than 23 million people and worked with partner agencies to conduct 128 socio-economic impact assessments of the pandemic in 93 countries.

8.   Programme development commenced soon after the pandemic was declared. The emergent and evolving nature of events required FAO to address them in a fluid and agile fashion. Unlike traditional programme development, response times were limited, and operational conditions posed an additional challenge.

9.   Under the leadership of senior management and through a participatory and dynamic process involving headquarters, regional and country offices, priorities and resource needs were identified. Working groups consisting of technical departments and decentralized offices representatives were established to further coalesce ideas and design the Programme, including seven Priority Areas (PA). The goals of the Programme are to:

   a. mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic; and

   b. strengthen the long-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods.

10.   These are to be achieved through projects being implemented in the seven Priority Areas:

   1. **Global Humanitarian Response Plan.** Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding livelihoods in food-crisis contexts.
   2. **Data for Decision-making.** Ensuring quality data and analysis for effective policy support to food-systems and Zero Hunger.
   3. **Economic Inclusion and Social Protection to Reduce Poverty.** Pro-poor COVID-19 responses for an inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery.
   4. **Trade and Food Safety Standards.** Facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond.
   5. **Boosting Smallholder Resilience for Recovery.** Protecting the most vulnerable, promoting economic recovery and enhancing risk management capacities.
   6. **Preventing the Next Zoonotic Pandemic.** Strengthening and extending the One Health approach to avert animal-origin pandemics.
   7. **Food Systems Transformation.** "Building to transform" during response and recovery.

11.   Although Programme implementation takes place at the project level, the projects are aligned with one or more Priority Areas and aim to contribute to attaining the overall Programme goals. To date, no explicit theory of change [1] has been formulated nor a consolidated results framework and related monitoring plan developed for the Programme although some expected results have been defined in each Priority Area. In order to gain a better understanding of the Programme, its theory of change was reconstructed by the evaluation team based on document reviews and consultations with key stakeholders (see Annex 2) for the purpose of designing the RTE. Although primarily intended for internal team use, the theory of change is also useful in contextualizing the RTE since it provides an overarching framework that explains how the Programme aims to achieve its goals.

12.   The Programme was developed to enhance coordination of FAO's response to the crisis and its related resource mobilization. Conceived as an "umbrella programme", it is designed to include all projects/trust funds related to the various components of the RRP operating under a simplified governance structure. The COVID-19 umbrella project cycle Appendix provides guidance on the steps to establish and manage those projects and is intended to foster responsive and timely processes.

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[1] A theory of change maps the causal change pathways that need to happen to reach a stated goal. The theories of change presented here are high-level and only present outcomes preconditions; the pathways are to be read starting at the bottom and using the "if-then" logic.

B. Portfolio

13.   The Programme was officially launched on 14 July 2020 with an appeal for USD 1.32 billion. As of early August 2021, the Programme's portfolio consisted of 227 projects with a total budget of USD 209 749 655 (almost 16 percent of the total appeal). Approximately 88 percent of the budget (USD 184 294 291) originates from voluntary contributions projects while 12 percent is from technical cooperation projects (USD 25 455 364).

14.   Table 1 shows the distribution of projects and corresponding budget totals per region, while Table 2 shows these per Priority Areas. The Africa and Asia and the Pacific regions account for over 60% of the Programme's budget. The humanitarian (PA1), social protection (PA3) and resilience (PA5) Priority Areas make up 87% of the Programme's budget.

Table 1. RRP Regional Distribution

Region[2]	# of projects	Budget (USD)	% of budget
RAF	88	84 770 761	40.42%
RAP	49	42 366 691	20.20%
RNE	29	32 820 298	15.65%
RLC	41	25 652 398	12.23%
REU	12	13 289 136	6.34%
GLO	8	10 850 371	5.17%
Total	**227**	**209 749 655**	**100%**

Table 2. Distribution per Priority Area

PA	# of projects	Budget (USD)	% of budget
PA1	63	93 372 725	44.53%
PA2	27	3 449 198	1.64%
PA3	34	26 718 970	12.74%
PA4	11	3 015 080	1.44%
PA5	77	61 372 830	29.27%
PA6	11	4 363 320	2.08%
PA7	36	9 703 606	4.63%
Info not available	18	7 706 926	3.68%

15.   The Programme's major donors are Canada (21 percent), the World Bank (20 percent), the European Union (14 percent), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (10 percent), the United States of America (6 percent), Japan (5 percent) and Belgium (4 percent); a complete list can be found in Appendix 2.

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[2] RAF Africa, RAP Asia and the Pacific, RLC Latin America and the Caribbean, RNE Near East and North Africa, REU Europe and central Asia, GLO Global

C. Areas of Focus: PA1& KPDS

16.   As per the RTE's work plan, after reconstructing the Programme's theory of change by the evaluation team, two topical areas were selected for further analysis.

17.   ***PA1- Global Humanitarian Response Plan***: PA1 encompasses FAO's contribution to the United Nations' COVID-19 own Global Humanitarian Response Plan launched by OCHA in April 2020. The GHRP addresses the impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding livelihoods of the most vulnerable, especially in food-crisis contexts. The GHRP consists of four pillars:

   a. *Rolling out data collection and analysis*: Largely based on remotely collected real-time data, the ensuing analysis aims to support evidence-based programming.

   b. *Ensuring availability of and stabilizing access to food for the most acutely food-insecure populations*. Focuses on ensuring the continuity of essential agricultural production and agri-food systems' operations, and mitigating the pandemic's impact upon vulnerable people.

   c. *Ensuring continuity of the critical food supply chain for the most vulnerable populations is a key determinant of food security and nutrition*. Centres on supporting continuous functioning of local food production and markets, value chains for the vulnerable smallholder farmers and food workers, and the critical food supply for vulnerable urban areas.

   d. *Ensuring food supply chain actors are not at risk of virus transmission is crucial to maintaining food supplies*. FAO's awareness-raising targets those hard to reach and who have limited access to basic health services or to the media.

18.   The theory of change for PA1 maps pathways that interpreted how the Organization's efforts in that domain were expected to contribute to achieving the Programmes goals (i.e., mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and contribute to the long-term resilience of agri-food systems and livelihoods).

19.   Although FAO can work at different stages along the pathways identified, a simple way of explaining the causal chains starts first with having partnerships, systems, resources and tools to deliver large remotely-managed programmes in place. From these different components, four higher level outcomes (one for each Priority Area pillar identified above) can be achieved:

   • **Timely, rapid, and targeted response** by the humanitarian community and governments to avert a deterioration in food security by having recovery and response programmes take anticipatory and remedial actions. For this to occur, *ongoing, near real-time assessment and monitoring data on the food security impacts of COVID-19 is required*.
   • **Availability and stable access to food by acutely food-insecure populations** ensured deriving from, among others, *timely input distribution and access to storage facilities*.
   • **Continuity of the critical food supply chain** for the most vulnerable will help ensure their ability to continue producing, selling or buying food. Hence, the need to support the *critical food supply chain so that it remains functioning*.
   • **Food supply chain actors are at a reduced risk of virus transmission** stemming from their increased awareness of the mitigating measures to take in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) guidance.

20.   The above interventions are closely integrated with **boosting smallholder resilience for recovery** (PA5) contributing towards the outcome of strengthening the long-term resilience of the agri-food systems and livelihoods.

21.   ***Knowledge products and data services***: FAO's knowledge products and data services produced in support to its response to the COVID-19 crisis predated the launch of the umbrella programme though new ones were developed since then. These were generated and/or used across all Priority Areas.

22.   The evaluation developed a simplified version of the theory of change of FAO's KPDS to guide its assessment. Although FAO can act at different stages along the change pathways identified in the

KPDS' theory of change, a simple way of explaining the causal chain starts with the identification of data gaps and information needs. Relevant FAO technical teams are then mobilized to respond to the needs for evidence and analysis, which in turn lead to knowledge products and data services being developed, disseminated and accessed by targeted recipients. Intended users then have information to design appropriate COVID-19 related interventions that mitigate the impact of the crisis and strengthen the long-term resilience of agri-food systems and livelihoods.

23. From March 2020 onwards, these "change" pathways were taken in order to convey a range of "key messages" aimed at avoiding the health crisis from becoming a food crisis, and to promote "building back better". At first, knowledge products and data services were primarily based on historical data, but their content evolved as evidence from the field was collected. With the formulation of an umbrella programme for FAO's work on COVID-19 response and recovery, a specific Priority Area was designed to enhance work on data for decision-making (PA2).

24. Although the theory of change for PA2 presents different change pathways, it can be briefly described as follows: stemming from the identification of stakeholders' data needs, one pathway aims to provide project partners with technical assistance to analyse the food security situation. Together with Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) data, this leads to the development of analytical reports on the impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity. PA2 also aims to provide technical assistance and trainings on agricultural surveys and to support adapting data collection methods to the COVID-19 context. New data sources would also be tapped to deliver timely relevant data on the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture. Technical assistance, data, and analyses would then provide partners with evidence to inform a cross-spectrum of subnational, national, regional and global responses, including policy responses, fiscal measures, trade policies and public investment initiatives.

III.   Good practices and lessons learned

25. This section includes the good practices (GPs) and lessons learned (LLs) identified by the real time evaluation that emerge from the implementation of FAO's COVID-19 humanitarian response (HR) and the development of COVID-19 related KPDS. A brief note on the approach used by the evaluation and the context in which the LLs and GPs occurred are also included.

26. *__Context__*: It is important to place the GPs and LLs in their proper context -which provides a reference point- to obtain a specific, accurate (and nuanced) understanding of their significance. Also, care must be taken not to over-generalize the GPs and LLs beyond the topic examined. While interpreting the LLs and GPs identified in this report, the following contextual elements are worth highlighting:

- FAO response took place during an unprecedented, evolving and multi-dimensional crisis that affected both beneficiaries and the Organization;
- the primacy of diminishing risks to all involved, including personnel and beneficiaries' safety during the pandemic; and
- actions had to overcome operational disruptions (i.e. travel restrictions, lockdowns) to ensure workflows – many of these actions were untested at large scale (i.e., teleworking, online meetings, among others).

27. *__Approach:__* Two separate assessments were conducted, one each for the HR and KPDS components of the RTE[3]. Both used a mixed methods approach to identify the good practices and lessons learned, including through the use of surveys, semi-structured interviews, document reviews and a portfolio analysis. In addition, each component also incorporated other methods:

- HR: focusing on four food crisis countries[4], an evaluation questionnaire was used to collect context-specific information.

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[3] Available as Annexes 3 and 4, respectively
[4] Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Syrian Arab Republic.

- KPDS: conducted a cybermetrics[5] study on selected KPDS and reviewed secondary sources such as altmetric data and web data analytics.

28.   Both studies faced a series of limitations stemming from the constraints imposed by the crisis, including remote data collection and FAO and other stakeholders' workloads. Additionally:

- HR: interventions are still ongoing hence data and analysis on actual results are still scant. The inability to interview project beneficiaries resulted in missing an important voice;

- KPDS: the users' survey received few responses and not all key informants were able to be interviewed.

29.   Mitigation measures were adopted in light of the limitations and are detailed in the respective component reports.

30.   Four overarching themes were used to ground the GPs and LLs:

a) Relevance- ensuring FAO's response was congruent with the needs of beneficiaries as well as how the internal process and capacities facilitated or hindered the degree of relevance;

b) Coherence- ensuring FAO's response was complementary to internal and external efforts as well as how the internal process and capacities facilitated or hindered the degree of coherence;

c) Inclusiveness- ensuring that the principle of "leave no one behind" (including gender mainstreaming) was followed; and

d) Business continuity- efforts to mitigate the impact of the crisis.

31.   The GPs and LLs are grouped by the themes described above, and are presented with supporting evidence from the topical area where it was identified (Humanitarian Response-HR or Knowledge Products and Data Services -KPDS) and the office/division that would be best placed to consider and/or mainstream them into the Organization's workflows and processes and/or future similar crises/scenarios.

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[5] Cybermetrics, or Webometrics, is mainly concerned with measuring aspects of the Web: web sites, web pages, parts of web pages, words in web pages, hyperlinks, web search engines.

	A. Ensuring the **relevance** of FAO's response: good practices
Good practice 1: *Defining strategic objectives early on and putting in place processes to address emerging issues in a crisis context, proved essential in ensuring FAO's response was relevant.* Potential continuation/replication by: • *Management*	Supporting good practices from the assessments: a) FAO's COVID-19 related knowledge products and data services were developed in response to a strategic goal and directions set by senior management in order to prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis through a dynamic and participatory process. [KPDS] b) Personnel pro-activeness, the increased internal collaboration, through frequent consultations and engagement with key external partners, led to the development of relevant products in a timely manner, allowing FAO to address emerging information needs. [KPDS] c) Applying lessons from previous crises, such as from the Ebola virus outbreak, showed the need to anticipate and address the continuity of the food supply chain, protecting livelihoods, preventing and mitigating gender-based violence, whilst following containment measures to prevent further transmission of the virus. [HR] d) With the complexity and scale of the COVID-19 pandemic, a system perspective of the agri-food chain and the aggravating factors of health and peace issues were vital. Providing and linking macro-economic (trade, remittances) and micro level perspectives with the seasonal variables in health and agriculture- coupled with aggravations of tensions and conflicts- were effective in anticipating a more holistic impact of COVID-19 especially, for the most vulnerable groups. [HR] e) FAO's two-pronged approach to maintain and secure existing critical humanitarian operations coupled with anticipatory actions for COVID-19 to safeguard livelihoods and protect the critical food supply chain, ensuring next season's production, were relevant in a protracted crisis. The combination of the anticipatory actions for COVID- 19, with other shocks e.g., drought, and the corresponding use of the Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS), provide for a more holistic response for people who are facing multiple stresses. [HR]
Good practice 2: *Leveraging existing data sources, including adapting information systems, as well as partnerships was an effective approach to provide context relevant evidence*	Supporting good practices from the assessments: a) Adapting existing monitoring, early warning and information sharing systems proved to be an effective way to provide relevant information on the global crisis situation. [KPDS] b) The assessment phase for addressing vulnerabilities and designing mode of interventions are a standard procedure. With time and travel restrictions, using existing assessments of the geographic areas and regions in the countries;

and guidance to mobilize resources and address user's needs. Potential continuation/replication by: • *Technical personnel* • *Decentralized Offices personnel* • *Office of Emergencies and Resilience*	and the existing assessments of the vulnerabilities of the local people together with rapid assessments and gender analysis provided a solid starting point to extrapolate initial assessments and response. [HR] c) Conducting joint assessments with partners, such as with the Humanitarian Country Team, United Nations agencies, governments and civil society organizations enabled the pooling and leveraging of expertise, resources and networks for a wider geographic coverage and a more timely and inter-sectoral assessment and response. This helped inform programmes in terms of geographical targeting and household targeting, particularly women. [HR] d) Conducting a series of assessments, baseline surveys and consultations enabled a progression towards building more robust analytics on COVID-19 and the agri-food systems. [HR] e) Using the analytics, FAOs expertise in food and agriculture, operational presence in various regions of the country, and track record in delivery contributed to the substantial results of about 25 percent of the target resource mobilization at the global and country levels. [HR]
Good practice 3: *The use of global knowledge products and data services, collaborating with external actors and using a diversity of dissemination media improved the targeting and uptake of the KPDS.* Potential continuation/replication by: • *Technical personnel* • *Decentralized Offices personnel* • *Office of Communications*	Supporting good practices from the assessments: a) The use of global knowledge products and data services to inform the development of additional analysis, develop/repurpose projects and provide more focused guidance contributed to better targeting specific sectors, regions, or communities. [KPDS] b) Collaborating with external actors for the development of COVID-19 related knowledge products and data services contributed to build a shared understanding about the impact of the crisis and was reported very effective to disseminate key messages and to support their uptake. [KPDS] c) Dissemination of COVID-19 related knowledge products and data services was facilitated by the use of various mediums, making available pre-packaged promotional content and presentations and by adapting content to target audiences. [KPDS]
A. Ensuring the **relevance** of FAO's response: lessons learned	
Lessons learned 1:	Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:

Assessing country situations in the context of lockdowns and travel bans proved challenging, in particular when gathering data on the needs of the marginalized communities and vulnerable groups; this requires managing the trade-off between timeliness and rigour of the assessments as well as ensuring that appropriate institutional/personnel capacities are in place to overcome methodological challenges and maintain up to date information. Potential consideration/ application by: • *Management* • *Technical personnel* • *Office of Emergencies and Resilience* • *Decentralized Offices personnel*	a) The capacity that the Organization has to collect and analyse data is an important determinant to how it can respond to similar crises. [KPDS] b) When restrictions in movement impede timely assessments, managing the trade-off between timeliness and rigour of assessments can be addressed through the temporal, spatial and institutional dimensions. As time progressed, continuously gathering and triangulating real-time data and information-- at macro levels and at diverse geographic locations within the country, with multiple stakeholders, including the beneficiaries— can eventually achieve rich data pictures, for the adjustments or re-direction of analysis, and for a complexity-aware decision-making and interventions. [HR] c) Investing in a systematic and digitized data sharing mechanism is needed to leverage pre-existing data and information (e.g. on the geographic areas and the peoples) as a basis to assess future crises; and to further add on new data and information. This is also a good basis for sharing and using lessons learned from responding to a health crisis that impacts agri-food systems. [HR] d) To enhance the reliability and ownership of the analytics, it is important to openly acknowledge and address the weaknesses in the analytics; and enable the data addition and correction from multiple sources. [HR]
Lesson learned 2: ***Vulnerable people did not often distinguish the impact of other shocks from that of COVID-19, requiring more integrated responses.*** Potential consideration/ application by:	Supporting lesson learned from the assessments: a) When asked about the impact of COVID-19, a number of vulnerable people tend to make little distinction between the impact of COVID-19 with other shocks as they were simultaneously being affected by many issues. They reportedly associated the exacerbation of their vulnerabilities with the deterioration of their coping strategies. In this regard, an understanding of multiple interconnected risks would be essential for a comprehensive approach for COVID-19 and future stressors needs the perspective of compounding shocks and people's vulnerability to protracted crises. Given these complexities, these need to be assessed and planned at inter-agency, inter-sectoral teams at country level and need to be location specific. [HR]

• *Office of Emergencies and Resilience* • *Decentralized Offices personnel*	
<u>Lesson Learned 3:</u> ***Timely and up to date knowledge products require responsive processes, suitable formats and personnel capacities so as to ensure their relevance.*** <u>Potential consideration/ application by:</u> • *Management* • *Technical personnel* • *Office of Communications* • *Decentralized Offices personnel*	<u>Supporting lessons learned from the assessments:</u> a) The headquarters' coordinated review and clearance mechanism for COVID-19 related knowledge products proved effective to prioritize key messages and disseminate reliable information but did not always respond to the need for timeliness and facilitate process monitoring from the decentralized offices. In hindsight, the response could have benefitted from implementing streamlined processes so as to avoid the challenges faced. [KPDS] b) Timely and up to date knowledge products require fluid process and suitable formats (mediums); with personnel having the appropriate skills to develop and disseminate knowledge products in crises contexts. [KPDS] c) Pre-existing partnerships facilitate the timely development of knowledge products. In all cases, there is a need to account for the development processes and clearance requirements from partners since this may add time before products are disseminated which, in a crisis context, may reduce their relevance. [KPDS]
<u>Lesson Learned 4:</u> ***The lack of monitoring information pertaining to the use and influence of KPDS limited the extent of follow-up actions.*** <u>Potential consideration/ application by:</u> • *Office of Communications* • *Technical personnel* • *Decentralized Offices personnel*	<u>Supporting lesson learned from the assessments:</u> a) The absence of monitoring data on the use and contributions of KPDS limited FAO personnel's ability at headquarters and in the decentralized offices to inform future follow-up actions, including more targeted advocacy, increased dissemination and provision of technical assistance. [KPDS]

	B. Ensuring the **coherence** of FAO's response: good practices
Good practice 4: ***Adopting measures that fostered "horizontal" (multi-disciplinary collaborations across divisions and offices) and "vertical" (across geographic locations) cooperation resulted in improved coordination, planning and alignment of efforts within the Organization. The measures also contributed to leverage synergies and complementarities with external partners***. Potential consideration/ application by: • *Management* • *Decentralized Offices personnel* • *Technical personnel* • *Office of Emergencies and Resilience*	Supporting good practices from the assessments: a) The coordination of the development process in substantive terms of COVID-19 related knowledge products and data services contributed to ensure consistent key messages from offices/divisions. Also, the development of common templates, communication resources and publishing standards helped to harmonize policy briefs. [KPDS] b) The management of the response to the crisis fostered technical teams and personnel at headquarters and in the decentralized offices to work as "One FAO", increasing "horizontal" and "vertical" cross-collaboration in the development of KPDS. [KPDS] c) Whilst the COVID-19 GHRP was designed as a standalone global programme, the integration of the GHRP to the specific country's HRP of the Humanitarian Country Team and/or the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster enabled the joint planning and alignment of strategic interventions to leverage synergies and complementarities. Specifically for the project locations, the coordination of work ensured identification of gaps, avoidance of duplication and optimizing the sequencing of interventions. [HR]
	B. Ensuring the **coherence** of FAO's response: lessons learned
Lesson Learned 5: ***A strategic and comprehensive approach through the lens of the humanitarian-development-peace***	Supporting lessons learned from the assessments: a) The increasing magnitude of compounding crisis such as COVID-19 underlines the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach through the lens of the humanitarian and development nexus in the context of peace. The multi-stakeholder collaboration and coordination at global, regional, national and local levels are important. A

nexus would be more effective and sustainable in achieving desired outcomes. A comprehensive narrative, including well-defined change pathways and interventions, that demonstrate the links to resilience outcomes may have led to efficient and sustainable interventions, and greater resource mobilization. Potential consideration/ application by: • *Management* • *Office of Emergencies and Resilience* • *Decentralized Offices personnel* • *Resource Mobilization Division*	strategic and comprehensive approach would be more effective and sustainable, not only for joint planning and implementation, but also for joint outcomes. [HR] b) In a world with increasingly unpredictable and complex crisis such as COVID-19, FAO's niche as a specialized humanitarian and agri-food technical expert, can be further leveraged by strategizing to strengthen the links and demonstrable outcomes of the combination of humanitarian assistance with the long-term resilience of agri-food systems. [HR] c) Whilst it's important to secure next agricultural seasons' availability of seeds, for example, it is equally important that seeds aid dependency is addressed through investments in long-term seed sector development and in supporting farmer seeds systems. On-going humanitarian assistance must go hand in hand with systematically addressing the underlying structural drivers of seeds insecurity in the context of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. [HR] d) Although the humanitarian component received the largest proportion of the budget, the donors funded FAO for the main expectations that FAO will use its technical expertise in food and agriculture to strengthen the agency of the most vulnerable and transition humanitarian action into resilience and development. The lack of a comprehensive narrative that demonstrates the links of "data for action" to "data that demonstrates resilience outcomes", including a theory of change (TOC) with a well-defined pathway and intervention options, including results framework, were a concern for donors and may have hindered more resource mobilization in this specific context. [HR]
Lesson Learned 6: *The pandemic posed a number of unforeseen challenges that affected the development of knowledge products and limited the extent of their dissemination.* Potential consideration/ application by: • *Management* • *Technical personnel* • *Office of Communications*	Supporting lessons learned from the assessments: a) The crisis situation made it difficult to devise how to synergize different types of knowledge products in order to create bundles that would target more comprehensively specific categories of end users. [KPDS] b) Depending on the data sources used, team composition, degree of collaboration and level of effort required to develop knowledge products varied. [KPDS] c) The lack of familiarity with dissemination plans or guidelines for ensuring coordinated dissemination planning and implementation by technical personnel contributing to the spreading of knowledge products and data services limited the extent of the outreach efforts. [KPDS] d) Thorough and multi-faceted analysis for effective targeting of specific types of users or communities is very difficult to conduct in a crisis context. [KPDS]

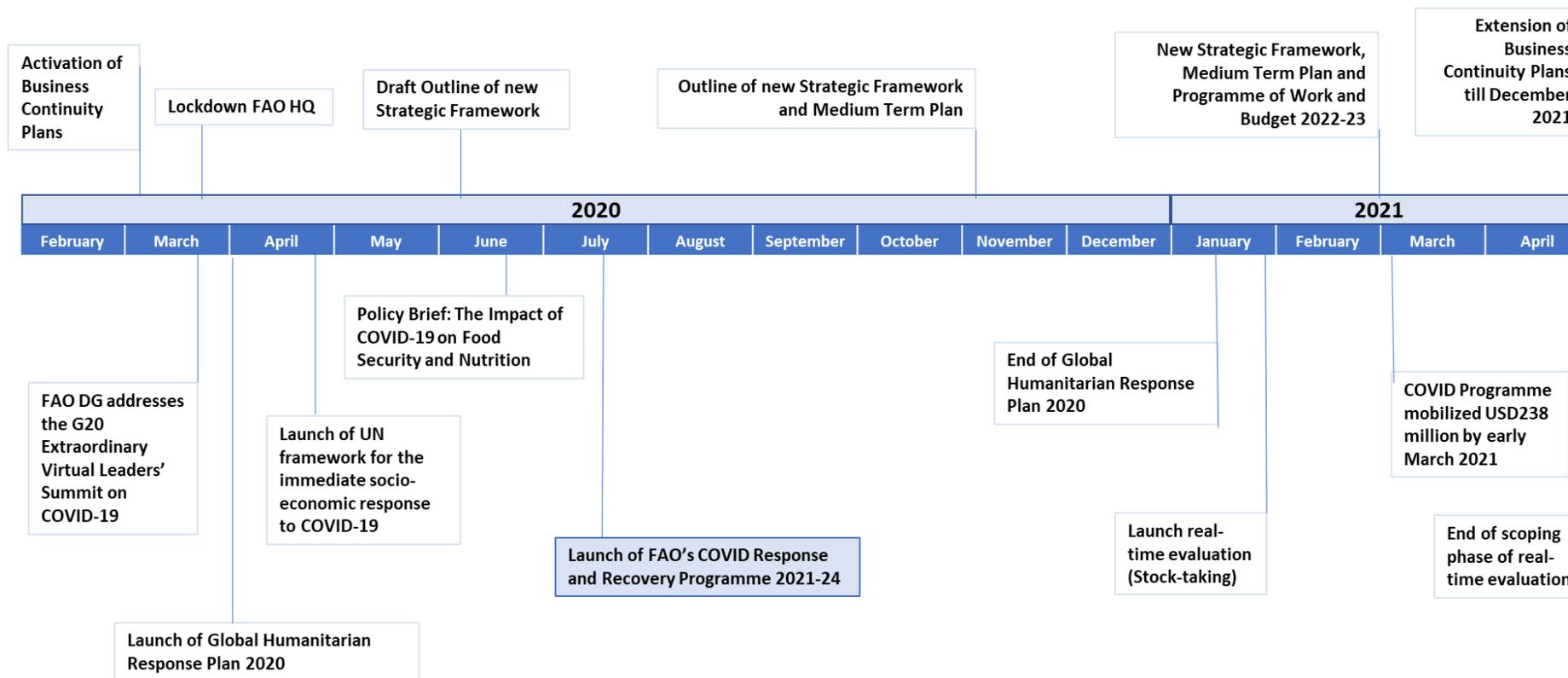| C. Ensuring the **inclusiveness** of FAO's response: good practices	
Good practice 5: ***Involving local communities in analysis and decision-making processes as well as introducing monitoring mechanisms to address accountability to the beneficiaries strengthened the agency of those communities and improved outcome delivery.*** Potential consideration/ application by: • *Office of Emergencies and Resilience* • *Decentralized Offices personnel*	Supporting good practices from the assessments: a) The agency of local communities was strengthened through: i) involving them in and discussing results of vulnerability assessments; ii) planning for interventions; iii) setting criteria and selections of beneficiaries; iv) monitoring and assessing processing and results; this not only enhanced the rigour of assessments and intervention efficiency but also joint ownership and improved outcome delivery. [HR] b) Inter-agency collaboration and the formation of the joint Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is a promising mechanism of monitoring and addressing accountability to the beneficiaries. The AAP enables a common mechanism to monitor gender-based violence together with the beneficiaries. [HR]
Good practice 6: ***Applying a range of measures that took into account both context risks and the risk posed by the actual humanitarian response improved the targeting and effectiveness of interventions.*** Potential consideration/ application by:	Supporting good practices from the assessments: a) Innovations in re-designing interventions for COVID-19 were facilitated by addressing both the context risks and the risk of the actual humanitarian response. These were done through mapping out the possible: i) population movements due to forced displacement, spontaneous returns, and seasonal and cultural migration ii) points of disruption of the agri-food supply chain due to restrictions posed by COVID-19; iii) vulnerable points in the agri-food supply chain where actors are exposed for possible virus transmission; along-side iv) guidelines for avoiding risk of transmission for the livelihoods distribution of humanitarian aid; and particularly v) assessing and addressing points where beneficiaries can be put at risks (e.g., risk of gender-based violence during cash distribution) [HR] b) Communication and sensitization about COVID-19 and avoiding the risks of transmissions were made effective through: i) adaptation in local languages; ii) coherence in messaging though coordination with health sector and

• *Office of Emergencies and Resilience* • *Decentralized Offices personnel*	government; iii) use of mixed media such as radio, television, posters, mobile cars with loud speakers in public places such as local markets; iv) mobilizing local communities and beneficiaries though volunteering and in the farmer field schools; v) specific targeting of women, indigenous peoples and pastoralist, who tend to have limited access to information; vi) providing hotlines where vulnerable people can ask for help, provide feedback and make complaints. [HR]
C. Ensuring the **inclusiveness** of FAO's response: lessons learned	
Lesson Learned 7: ***Ensuring mainstreaming of gender and the leave no one behind approach in KPDS requires that additional guidance and support be provided in order to obtain widespread and consistent content.*** Potential consideration/ application by: • *Office of Communications* • *Gender Unit*	Supporting lessons learned from the assessments: a) Although some gender- and leave no one behind (LNOB)-specific briefs were developed, not all publications mainstreamed these concepts. The lack of guidelines for mainstreaming gender and leave no one behind approach in the development of KPDS was mitigated by the authors' own exposure to and uptake of these principles but has limited the degree of consistent comprehensive, and systematic application of criteria across FAO's key messages. [KPDS]
Lesson Learned 8: ***Strengthening peoples' agency requires integrating corresponding measures that address long-term needs and consequences such as participatory processes and inclusion in decision-making.***	Supporting lessons learned from the assessments: a) Immediate market-based interventions such as CASH vouchers supports local people to make their own decisions and act accordingly. However, strengthening peoples' agency needs to be integrated in holistic and long-term approaches that support financial inclusion, people's autonomy and ownership, social mobilization and governance, and transformation of gender relations. [HR]

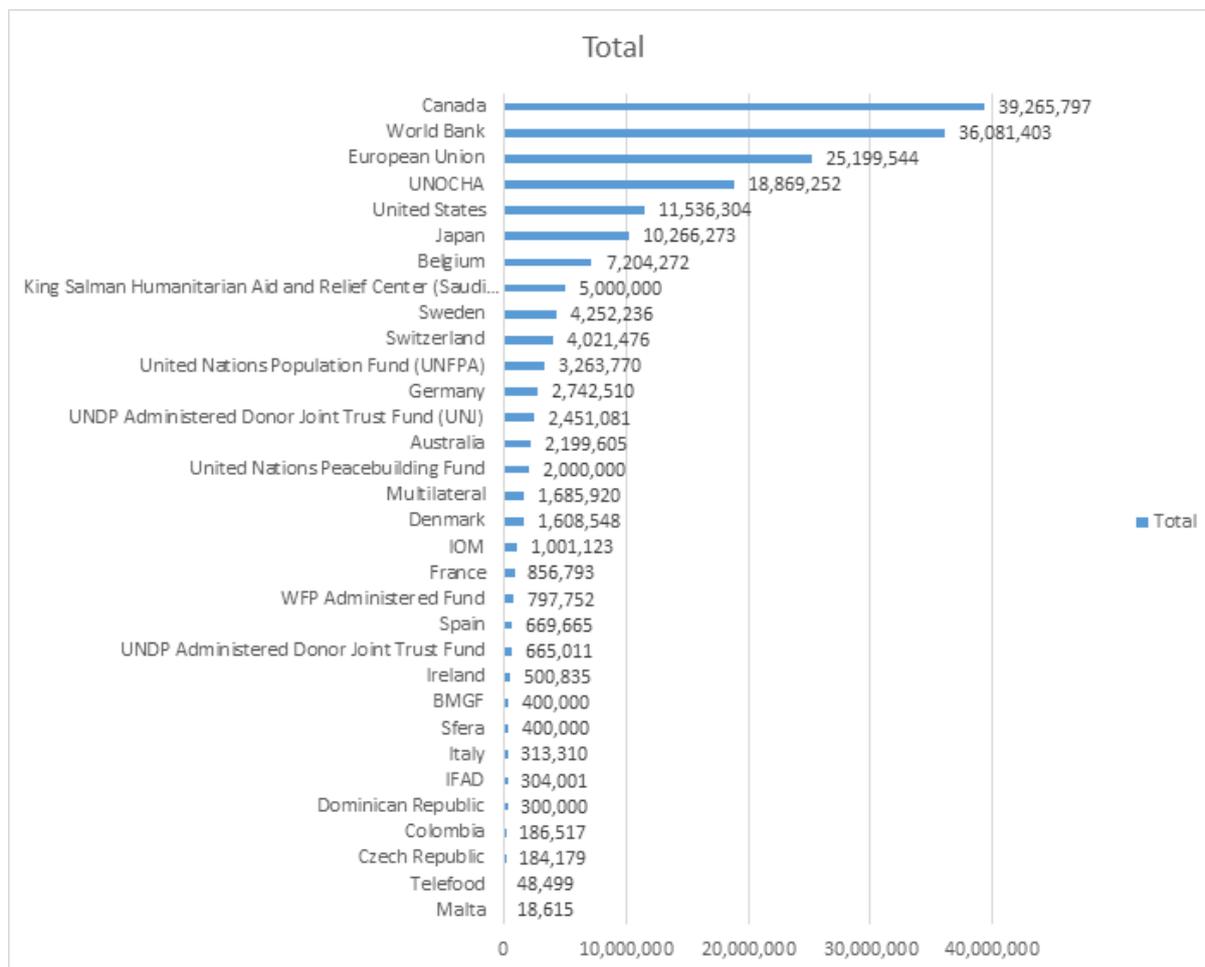|	b) Mechanisms such as Accountability to Affected Populations could potentially provide the needed safe spaces and mechanisms for communicating, monitoring and addressing sensitive issues. Such a mechanism needs decentralized structures with community involvement and with discreetness and accountability in place. [HR]
Potential consideration/ application by: • *Office of Emergencies and Resilience* • *Decentralized Offices personnel*	
Lesson Learned 9: ***A systematic and nuanced understanding of the circumstances and needs of vulnerable groups is essential for adjusting interventions and increasing their effectiveness.*** Potential consideration/ application by: • *Office of Emergencies and Resilience* • *Decentralized Offices personnel*	Supporting lessons learned from the assessments: a) In order to reach and respond to the most vulnerable, a systematic understanding of their points of vulnerabilities and adjusting the mode of interventions so as not to risk the spreading of infection and further aggravate vulnerabilities are required. The corresponding information and awareness raising need to be in the local language and/or dialect using multiple media. [HR] b) Where possible, rely on national and local first responders. Localization leverages the specific understanding of the circumstances, proximity to the beneficiaries including hard to reach areas due to conflict; and is cost-effective. [HR]
D. Ensuring **business continuity**: good practices	
Good practice 7: ***The implementation of its business continuity plan and derived practices mitigated the impact of***	Supporting good practices from the assessments: a) The formulation of a business continuity plan, which focus on both health and safety of personnel and continuing of key operations, received ICT support and guidelines for operation for FAO personnel and partners were applied

the pandemic on FAO personnel and operations. Potential consideration/ application by: • *Management*	across FAO from headquarters to country offices. The monitoring and support for the implementation of the business continuity plan were especially crucial at the regional, sub-regional and country offices. [HR] b) A decisive factor for the business continuity [of the humanitarian response] was the technical support mechanisms at headquarters, regional and country offices, which were coordinated by the Office of Emergencies and Resilience to ensure smooth operation and resolution of technical issues. [HR] c) FAO personnel adapted swiftly to online collaboration and work processes including by testing and adopting new technologies and accelerating the digitization of the Organization. [KPDS] d) The decisive response from senior management swiftly reaching and steering across departments, regions and countries enabled the establishment of a core management team, the formulation of FAO's COVID-19 umbrella programme, resource mobilization and diminished silos within FAO. [HR] e) Leadership commitment and action are important in breaking silos and mobilizing expertise across FAO, enabling the Organization to respond to a crisis that also affects its own operations and personnel. [HR]
	D. Ensuring business continuity: lessons learned
Lesson Learned 5: ***Humanitarian operational responsiveness and administrative efficiency are dependent on, among others, the availability of a functional, ready-for-action humanitarian expertise in place and enabling greater decision-making in decentralized offices.*** Potential consideration/ application by: • *Management*	Supporting lessons learned from the assessments: a) In a world with increasingly unpredictable and complex crisis such as COVID-19, having a functional, ready-for-action humanitarian expertise, strategy and multi-level operational structure, including presence in various regions of the country, is a pre-requisite for a meaningful and timely anticipatory response. [HR] b) Given that surge capacity can be impeded by travel restriction, FAO's decentralized operation needs to be better optimised since they are at the forefront of the crisis. Further efficiency in administrative processes and programming can be enhanced by enabling greater decision-making at regional, sub-regional and country offices. [HR]

• *Office of Emergencies and Resilience* • *Decentralized Offices*	

Appendix 1. Timeline of FAO's COVID-19 response and related developments

Appendix 2. Programme donors

Total

Donor	Total
Canada	39,265,797
World Bank	36,081,403
European Union	25,199,544
UNOCHA	18,869,252
United States	11,536,304
Japan	10,266,273
Belgium	7,204,272
King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (Saudi...	5,000,000
Sweden	4,252,236
Switzerland	4,021,476
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	3,263,770
Germany	2,742,510
UNDP Administered Donor Joint Trust Fund (UNJ)	2,451,081
Australia	2,199,605
United Nations Peacebuilding Fund	2,000,000
Multilateral	1,685,920
Denmark	1,608,548
IOM	1,001,123
France	856,793
WFP Administered Fund	797,752
Spain	669,665
UNDP Administered Donor Joint Trust Fund	665,011
Ireland	500,835
BMGF	400,000
Sfera	400,000
Italy	313,310
IFAD	304,001
Dominican Republic	300,000
Colombia	186,517
Czech Republic	184,179
Telefood	48,499
Malta	18,615

Annexes are available on the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) website at
https://www.fao.org/evaluation/en/

Annex 1. Real time evaluation terms of reference

https://www.fao.org/3/cb7260en/cb7260en.pdf

Annex 2. Programme theory of change (Reconstructed)

https://www.fao.org/3/cb7261en/cb7261en.pdf

Annex 3. Humanitarian response component report

https://www.fao.org/3/cb7262en/cb7262en.pdf

Annex 4. Knowledge products and data services component report

https://www.fao.org/3/cb7263en/cb7263en.pdf