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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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Update on the Evaluation of FAO's evaluation function

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In line with the provisions made in the Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED), an independent evaluation of the evaluation function in FAO should be conducted every six years.
- Following Programme Committee's recommendation to endorse the *Terms of reference for the independent evaluation of FAO's evaluation function* at its 136th (Special) Session in April 2023, the evaluation process has completed a number of steps as outlined in the present document, including: recruitment of an external evaluation firm; holding an evaluation kick-off meeting; submission of the inception report; data collection and analysis.
- The draft Evaluation report is currently being finalized for review of the Steering Committee, to enable the final report to be ready for consideration of the Programme Committee in November 2024.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

- The Programme Committee is invited to review the content of this document and make recommendations to the Council as deemed appropriate.

Draft Advice

The Committee

- **welcomed the update on the Evaluation of FAO's evaluation function and looked forward to receiving the Evaluation report at its November Session in 2024.**

I. Introduction

1. The mandate and activities for evaluation in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are set out in the Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) (2010),¹ which requires an independent evaluation of the evaluation function every six years.²
2. As endorsed by its Governing Bodies held from April to May 2023, FAO launched an independent evaluation of its evaluation function to be carried out over 2023–2024.
3. This document provides an update on progress of delivery against the deliverables outlined in the Terms of Reference (TOR)³ of the Evaluation.

II. Background – Update on Evaluation Process

4. Following the recommendation of the Programme Committee to endorse the TOR at its 136th (Special) Session on 18 April 2023 and subsequent endorsement by the 172nd Session of the Council (24–28 April 2023), FAO has successfully completed a number of the agreed steps, with the overall process on track to deliver the final evaluation report to the Session of the Programme Committee in November 2024.
5. A **Steering Committee** was set up, comprising of:
 - i. two Member representatives: FAO Programme Committee Chairperson (Ms Yael Rubinstein) and the Vice-Chairperson (H.E. Mr Carlos Bernardo Cherniak⁴);
 - ii. two Management representatives: Chairperson of the FAO Evaluation Committee (Ms Beth Bechdol, Deputy Director-General) and an Assistant Director-General (ADG)/Regional Representative (Mr Jongjin Kim, ADG and Regional Representative in the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific); and
 - iii. two external experts: Ms Alison Evans, former Director-General, Evaluation at the World Bank Group and Mr Indran A. Naidoo, Director, Independent Office of Evaluation, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
6. **FAO recruited an independent evaluation firm** - Lattanzio KIBS - following a competitive recruitment process in line with FAO's procurement rules and review and endorsement of the Steering Committee.
7. The **Evaluation kick-off meeting** was held on 28 September 2023, where the Lattanzio KIBS team was introduced to the Steering Committee and presented its proposed evaluation methodology for comment. A number of comments and questions were addressed at the meeting, followed by internal consultations to inform the approach to the methodology. This included feedback on the initial mapping of stakeholders and the approach to sampling to ensure data is generated that is representative of the variety of OED evaluations and their respective users.
8. The above inputs were used by Lattanzio KIBS to develop the **Inception Report**. This was submitted for review of the Steering Committee and was approved in December 2023 following amendments to address comments and suggestions.
9. To begin the data gathering phase, the firm conducted a number of **interviews with FAO evaluation users** including senior management and technical divisions, OED managers and selected personnel, in late 2023. These discussions focused on supporting the analysis of achievement against

¹ FAO. 2017. Basic Texts, Vol. II. H Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation, VI. Quality Assurance (paragraph 30.c) <https://www.fao.org/3/mp046e/mp046e.pdf>

² The previous evaluation took place in 2016, and therefore it is timely to conduct another one in 2023.

³ As recommended for endorsement at the 136th (Special) Session of the Programme Committee in April 2023. <https://www.fao.org/3/nm044en/nm044en.pdf>

⁴ Replaced by the Vice-Chairperson of the Programme Committee, H.E. Ms Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to FAO, elected at the 137th Session of the Programme Committee in November 2023.

the evaluation questions (related to independence, impartiality, credibility, transparency and usefulness), including factors leading to success as well as lessons learned and areas of improvement.

10. From January to February 2024, the firm undertook **country-level visits** in Accra (Ghana), Amman (Jordan), Bangkok (Thailand), Budapest (Hungary) and Santiago de Chile (Chile) and met with country-level evaluation managers, senior management, and users of evaluations among programmatic personnel, as well as Government, UN and other development partners' representatives.

11. Following FAO's technical review and endorsement, an **online survey** was released in February 2024 to target a broad range of evaluation authors, partners, and users, with the aim of increasing the quantitative evidence relevant to the evaluation universe and develop some comparison between OED-led and non-OED led evaluations. The survey was targeted at programmatic personnel and senior personnel in non-programmatic support and strategic functions, OED personnel and focal points, evaluation external experts included in the OED's roster, as well as FAO Members – through the membership of the Programme Committee.

12. The evaluation firm held meetings with the Office of Evaluation, Ms Beth Bechdol, Deputy Director-General (DDG), and Ms Beth Crawford, Assistant Director-General and Director of the Office of Strategy, Programme and Budget (OSP) at the end of February to present initial conclusions and findings for comments, reaction and validation before development of the draft evaluation report.

13. At the time of submission of this paper, the **Evaluation report** was under development, which will be followed by quality assurance reviews and eventual endorsement by the Steering Committee before consideration by the Programme Committee at its Session in November 2024.