



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

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Organización
de las
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Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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Follow-up on the Evaluation of the Cross-organizational Strategy on Communicating FAO's Messages

A. CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION AND ITS FOLLOW-UP

1. Following the Evaluation of the Cross-organizational Strategy on Communicating FAO's Messages, which formed part of the regular programme of evaluations for the FAO Governing Bodies undertaken by the Evaluation Service, and the Management Response to that Evaluation, considered by the Programme Committee at its Ninety-fourth Session, this document provides information on follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations of the Evaluation.
2. At the same time, through a consideration of the specific points highlighted by the Programme Committee in its review of the Evaluation and the Management Response to the Evaluation, it will be noted that the Organization has adopted a number of approaches which seek to mitigate some of the concerns of the Evaluation while building on identified areas of strength in FAO's communication and outreach activities. In particular, these include a more strategic corporate strategy with clearly identified priorities and contributions from all the relevant technical units within FAO as well as the decentralized offices; a greater emphasis on working in partnership – with a number of partnership arrangements having been concluded since the Evaluation with major broadcast media and with civil society organizations; efforts have also been made to improve the targeting of press releases, video material and other information and communication tools with an increased emphasis on receiving feedback on the impact of FAO's communication outputs. Finally, a number of institutional arrangements have been made aimed at improving in-house communication and coordination of information and outreach activities.

B. STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN LINE WITH FAO REFORM AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

3. In its consideration of the Evaluation, the Committee had noted the key role of communication in providing the Organization with legitimacy and visibility, conditions that were

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vital to its continuity and credibility. Concern had however been expressed that careful consideration and review be given to the various communication instruments in reaching general audiences through the media, versus the FAO Ambassadors' Programme and TeleFood and to a certain extent questioned the value added by these. It noted, nevertheless, that implementation of some of the recommendations in the evaluation were already under way and had been taken into account in the context of the Director-General's reform proposal.

4. In this respect, and in keeping with the results of a separate evaluation of the TeleFood programme, it will be noted that the World Food Day, FAO Goodwill Ambassadors Programme and TeleFood have since been fully integrated into the work of the Communication Division (KCI). These communication and advocacy instruments, together forming the World Food Day and Special Initiatives Branch, constitute one of the four branches of KCI, the others being the Electronic Publishing Policy and Support Branch, the Media Relations Branch and the Public Relations and Promotions Branch. As such, the communication and advocacy functions have been more clearly delineated and given context within the overall communication approach of the Organization as implemented by KCI.

5. Through a documented process of weekly managers' meetings, as well as one-on-one meetings with the Director KCI also on a weekly basis, all communication and advocacy functions report to each other, obtain feedback and are accountable to the group as a whole with the objective of ensuring overall coherence in corporate communication.

6. It will be recalled that the departure point for the Evaluation of Communicating FAO's messages was the 1999 Corporate Communication Policy and Strategy (CCPS) under the coordination of the Corporate Communication Committee (CCC). The Evaluation Committee had noted, however, that most FAO staff were not familiar with the CCPS and that the priorities identified in the strategy were not implemented in an integrated way. An institutional approach to horizontal communication was thus needed.

7. In response to this, FAO has worked to give a sense of dynamism to the process of creating an annual Corporate Communication Plan (CCP), in which all technical units and decentralized offices are encouraged to provide an input, and subsequently to discuss their priorities and any issues which might arise from these, during a series of meetings between KCI staff and the concerned technical units. Following these meetings, the main messages, as agreed with the technical departments, are consolidated into the annual CCP which is made available to all staff on the FAO Intranet.

8. Improvements have been seen, in terms of a better identification of communication issues and priorities by technical units as a result of a better informed and more participatory process. More effort has also been made to ensure greater visibility, through accessibility of the CCP on the Intranet and its reference in communications with the decentralized offices. Technical departments are beginning to integrate communication needs into their planning based on the priorities identified in the CCP, such as preparation of information materials and outreach activities associated with technical committee meetings, launches and visits by high-level experts.

9. Nevertheless *ad hoc* issues and events requiring the production of information materials, exhibits, press conferences and other activities which were not foreseen in the CCP continue to put pressure on the staff and budget of KCI.

10. In consequence, while acknowledging the need for a strategic approach to forward planning, a contingency is also vital to meet the many *ad hoc* requests received by KCI. Increased use is made of outsourcing most notably in the areas of translation, and some editorial and design functions. However, and in order to ensure a consistent level of quality, core staff resources will always be essential to the preparation of high-quality multilingual information and outreach materials.

C. RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC ISSUES RAISED BY THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

11. Following the Evaluation, the Committee had identified specific issues for consideration relating to a more effective corporate approach to communication as follows.

Global dimension of World Food Day

12. In keeping with the views expressed by the Committee, that World Food Day should be a *genuine world day involving all the UN food agencies*, and should involve *the Regional Offices in developing materials specific to their region*, reports from the decentralized offices in particular, indicate that WFD has assumed a momentum and increasingly global character of its own. In 2006, for example, not only were WFD events including a variety of information and advocacy materials derived from those initiated at HQ, but produced locally by a number of countries. Activities and events reached a very wide range of people in government, among civil society organizations, in universities and schools, parliamentarians, farmers groups, and other community-based groups at the grassroots level. Altogether about 140 countries participated in WFD-related activities and events, as reported on the WFD website, including in countries like the Philippines where, WFD was observed in association with the United Nations MDG Campaign Stand up initiative and a Run for Food Race. It may be noted that the WFD website received some two million hits in the month of October 2006, one indicator of strong public interest in World Food Day.

13. With the advent of the online News clipping service, Meltwater News, FAO has been able to monitor feedback in the international press on FAO's announcement of the World Food Day theme. Interestingly, a number of requests for follow-up information have been received from civil society indicating real interest in WFD-related events, and in the theme which many request well in advance in order to plan and organize activities around the annual theme.

14. For 2007, regular meetings have been held with IFAD, WFP and Bioversity International to coordinate the Run-for-Food event taking place as part of the 2007 WFD Events on 21 October.

Defining advocacy and communication

15. With regard to a clearer definition of the role of advocacy and communication, FAO identifies four pillars of communication:

1. communication through *technical and specialized publications* representing a sizeable part of the normative work of the Organization. This includes the biennial flagship publications SOFA, SOFI, SOFIA, SOFO and SOCO. It is worth noting that the flagships provide a high level of technical analysis with a view to informing policy makers first and foremost. Since the scheduling of the production of the flagship publications is carried out in advance of that of the Corporate Communication Plan, due to the substantial lead time needed for multilingual production, the themes chosen may not be the same as those noted in the CCP, though they are frequently closely related.
2. *public information*, involving dissemination of important information and guidance related to issues in the Organization's mandate such as food safety, transboundary animal diseases and plant pests through such means as press conferences, news releases, speeches of the Director-General, and the Newsroom pages of the FAO Website, as well as the organization of seminars, briefings and other public information events, both at headquarters and in the decentralized offices, and dissemination of stories through radio and television;
3. the *corporate communication* function aimed at increasing awareness of the work of the Organization and its unique contribution to the development process through media coverage. This area of activity includes ensuring donor visibility, a matter of growing importance as extrabudgetary voluntary contributions increase.
4. FAO's *advocacy* role centres on giving a voice to the world's undernourished, poor and marginalized. In addition to exhorting governments in both developed

and developing countries to devote more resources to investment in agriculture and rural development, this includes support to Ministries of Agriculture at country level and fostering relations with donors, civil society, local authorities and other stakeholders, with the aim of putting agriculture, food security, poverty and environmental sustainability high on the agenda. In this context the FAO flagship SOFI may be regarded as an advocacy tool as well as a technical publication reporting progress towards achievement of the World Food Summit targets.

Support to staff in their role as FAO spokespersons

16. The Committee noted that more impetus and flexibility was required to encourage staff to communicate to diverse audiences with a particular emphasis on the role and support to the FAO Representatives (FAORs). Working with the Staff Development Group, KCI has helped to develop a Media Skills training course, as part of a broader Communications Skills suite of courses, to equip staff members to take advantage of opportunities provided by encounters with the media, to communicate FAO's messages effectively. Special emphasis is placed on support and training to FAORs with courses organized for groups of FAORs at headquarters designed specifically to assist them in dealing with the media, as well as in making presentations to a wide variety of audiences. Key facts and other briefing materials are also being developed and provided to assist FAORs in advance in responding to media requests for interviews, in particular on topics of special interest to the media.

The FAO Homepage

17. While recognizing the wealth of information available on the FAO Web site, the Committee referred to the need to make the FAO homepage more accessible. With a preliminary proposal already initiated by KCI early in 2006, the process was taken a step further in June 2007 with the decision by the Corporate Communication Committee (CCC) to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group, chaired by the Director KCI, to focus on issues of content and design of the homepage and to work in parallel with the WAICENT Advisory Group (WAG) as it concentrated on technical aspects of the new homepage. A deadline of mid July 2007 was set for submission of the results of the work of the two groups, through the CCC, to the Office of the Director-General for approval. In conceptualizing an updated homepage, a review was made of a variety of UN system and other Web sites with a view to improving the accessibility of the site's content, simplifying navigation, continuing the Organization's multilingual policy for the Web site, and generally aiming for a user-friendly site.

Multilingual content of the FAO Website

18. The Committee noted that *more attention should be given to improving the quality of translation on the technical department Web pages*. Through a corporate roster of qualified translators, screened, tested and approved by central translation services, the Organization seeks to ensure that technical departments, which are responsible for their own Web pages, obtain translations of more uniform quality.

19. In this context, the Committee *had queried whether FAO should cease distribution of FAO's publications, in view of the fact that many audiences in developing countries did not have effective computer access*. Given the high cost of production, transport and storage generally, and the general demand for electronic publications, regardless of difficulties experienced by some audiences in developing countries in connectivity and access to computers, publications continue to be made available electronically.

20. The Director-General established in late 2005, an Inter-departmental Working Group on Electronic Printing, in which all the technical departments are represented, to consider this and related questions in greater depth. As a result of the reviews and analyses it has undertaken to date, the IDWG on Electronic Printing has recommended that the decision as to whether or not a publication should be produced in print, in electronic form, or both, must be taken on a case-by-

case basis and be determined by the target audience and its means of access to publications as well as by the scope and purpose of content. The Group has implemented measures to reduce print runs of those products printed and hence future storage volumes and costs and also to reduce current stocks in storage. A greater use of print-on-demand, coupled with shorter-run printing using traditional technologies, is further contributing to efficiencies in publishing and dissemination without jeopardizing access to products by audiences in developing countries.

FAO's contribution to UN system-wide advocacy and communication

21. In focusing on *the need for FAO to contribute to the development of a UN system-wide advocacy and communication strategy*, FAO is increasingly involved in Task Forces set up by the UN Communication group and other inter-agency fora, both in the context of emergency communications on subjects like Avian Influenza, and also matters such as UN Reform and the MDGs. In this context, the Director, KCI attends meetings of the United Nations Communication Group, currently working on developing a common position regarding communications in the context of the One UN initiative.

Monitoring FAO's communication outputs

22. The Committee identified *the need for a greater share of resources to be devoted to monitoring the uptake of FAO's communication outputs*. Since June 2006, FAO has subscribed to a major international news clipping and monitoring service Meltwater News (formerly known as Magenta News). Through the service, FAO is able to monitor a wide variety of media carrying articles which mention FAO. The service also allows users to carry out both quantitative and qualitative analysis of uptake by type of news service, journal or online media.

23. Since early 2006, media officers have been or are being outposted to several major European cities (for example in Stockholm to cover the Nordic countries, Madrid, Paris, Berlin and London), with the aim of bringing FAO mandated issues and priorities to the attention of print and broadcast media, as well as monitoring uptake of FAO news output by national media. Worldwide access to FAO headquarters events has significantly increased thanks to the introduction of a live webcasting service via the Internet, enabling the media and the public in general to follow the proceedings of FAO news events and meetings.

FAO Goodwill Ambassadors programme

24. The Committee called for a more *focused approach to the FAO Ambassadors Programme*. On the one hand, FAO is focusing on fewer, more active Ambassadors and working with these, targeting just a few events and media opportunities where they can have most impact. Recent visits by FAO Goodwill Ambassadors Raúl Gonzalez and Dee Dee Bridgwater to projects in Senegal and Mali respectively received wide attention in the international press. At the same time, FAO is also reviewing the recent JIU report on UN Ambassadors with a view to revisiting the strategy underpinning the Ambassadors' programme as an integral part of FAO's advocacy programme, also taking into account the recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) on this matter, when available.