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Evaluation of FAO's support to Zero Hunger (SDG2) - Second Phase

Management Response

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1. Management welcomes the Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 2: "*End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.*" The Evaluation confirms the importance for FAO to fully engage, and acknowledges contributions to the shaping of measures to advance progress for its realization. Management also appreciates that the Evaluation was carried out in an exceptionally challenging situation which prevented a more thorough investigation and analysis, particularly of field-related issues, and praises the team for adjusting its work to deliver a body of useful suggestions for improvement. It is furthermore appreciated that the Evaluation is also positive in describing ongoing efforts to provide more comprehensive, holistic support, and describes well the comparative advantage, potential, and challenges for FAO to fully contribute to the realization of SDG2 and the 2030 Agenda for development.
2. The Evaluation provides helpful analysis of the current integration of SDG2 components into FAO's work at global, regional, and country levels, highlighting the already existing mainstreaming of SDGs into FAO technical and analytical work. Management also acknowledges findings related to the need to further develop and provide balanced support across different targets, particularly to increase focus on nutrition, and to devote further attention to ensuring inclusion of biodiversity and ecosystems with dedicated focus, as well as better mainstreaming across FAO's work at all levels.
3. FAO appreciates the recognition of the Organization's potential to lead change by strengthening its analytical capacity, providing Members and stakeholders with diverse, comprehensive and accessible data, information and analysis, to allow countries to properly and quickly map the needs, identify viable solutions, and apply measures to map and address risks and potential trade-offs. The Evaluation highlights the need for supporting countries to scale up the impact of interventions by breaking complex problems into workable and yet integrated solutions, and confirms that FAO is ideally placed to coordinate efforts and build partnerships, capitalizing on its analytical and technical expertise.
4. The Evaluation identifies the principle of leaving no one behind as the main driver to the suggested upgrade of FAO's profile and contribution to the realization of sustainable development, with useful findings and recommendations to ensure empowerment of vulnerable groups and actors often left behind, particularly youth and indigenous peoples. While Management appreciates the importance of the principle of "leaving no country and no person behind," equal and prior attention, with further analysis, should be paid to the overall drivers and opportunities to promote transformation towards sustainable food and agriculture systems. This is in fact essential to meet the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, which aims not only at improving, but transforming, food and agriculture systems to eradicate hunger and poverty and realize sustainable development.
5. Management would also like to highlight that significant progress in the direction suggested by the recommendations is already being made in a number of areas, including: the Organization's approved new headquarters structure with modular management and more agile modalities for mobilizing FAO technical and analytical capacity; the establishment of new units, in particular the Office of SDGs, the Office of SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs,¹ the Food Systems and Food Safety Division, and the three Centres; the Chief Economist and Chief Scientist; as well as the development of core initiatives and programmes, such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.
6. Management also takes note of the suggestion to further explore ways to strengthen country office capacities to deploy timely and effective support, while also ensuring strengthened attention to normative and policy work, noting however that implementation of a number of recommendations may be challenged by budgetary constraints.
7. All recommendations are accepted, noting that Recommendations 4 and 6 are already being addressed by other ongoing processes resulting from the previous Evaluation Phase I. Detailed comments on the specific recommendations are provided in the Matrix.

¹ Office of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

Management Response to the Evaluation of FAO's support to Zero Hunger (SDG2) Second Phase - Matrix

Evaluation recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Management plan			Date
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding Required (Y or N)
Recommendation 1: Weak operational capacity in FAO Country Offices is a strategic liability, and needs systemic strengthening over the long-term. The UN Reform requires greater decision-making power and financial autonomy for FAO Country Offices, as well as significant analytical support to their capacity to engage with other UN agencies on an equal analytical footing at country level.	Accepted	<p>The newly approved structure of the Organization, facilitating horizontal coordination among technical streams aims at channeling FAO's support in a more integrated way, including for strengthening operational and programmatic capacity of FAO Decentralized Offices.</p> <p>The Hand-in-Hand Initiative, in particular, meets the needs for an integrated "One FAO" or whole of FAO approach that provides data and analysis, technical and policy support, greatly expanded use of partnerships through a match-making approach, and everything tied together with a comprehensive investment programme and dashboards to provide improved transparency and accountability, as well as tools for coordinating and sustain a complex development process.</p> <p>FAO is also committed to further strengthen the Organization's engagement in the UN Development System repositioning, ensuring timely and strategic involvement of FAO country offices in the reinvigorated UN country-level programming, through effective contribution to the Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) from which FAO's Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) are now duly grounded and derived.</p>	Senior Managers in respective responsibilities and OSP	End-2021	N

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		Significant progress was also made in making data and analysis available to decentralized offices, including through the establishment of the geospatial platform of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and the new Data Lab.			
Recommendation 2: FAO's procedures and centralized administration processes need to be revised if FAO is to successfully implement or even support large development programmes at scale in a cost-effective manner. FAO must also strengthen its operational skills, and programmatic tools and implementation modalities in order to mobilize more strategic and programmatic voluntary contributions, spend them well in support of SDG 2, and give some visibility to the results achieved. This needs to include an introduction of programme approach (i.e. the ability to regroup different projects into one cohesive programme in corporate financial and reporting systems) to reduce transaction costs and improve continuity of effort.	Accepted	<p>The newly approved structure of the Organization, facilitating horizontal coordination among technical streams aims at better coordinating and channeling FAO's support in a more integrated way, including for strengthening operational and programmatic capacity of FAO Decentralized Offices.</p> <p>The importance of streamlining policies, procedures and operational modalities is also being discussed to create a more agile enabling environment and allow more timely response and delivery. This includes, for instance, the already streamlined procedures for TCP approvals that allow speedy availability of catalytic funds in the context of country, regional, and global response to the effects of COVID-19 on food and agriculture systems. It is foreseen, furthermore, to conduct an assessment on the feasibility to move from a project-based model to a programme-based model as moving to a more programmatic approach could reduce transaction costs and increase the impact of our interventions. The streamlining of administrative processes is a priority of the Organization, including through increased decentralization of decision-making whenever possible, and review of business model of</p>	DDG-Bechdol/ Chief Economist/ DDG- Thomas/OSG	End-2021	N

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		Decentralized Offices to support more effective and efficient implementation at field level. In this exercise, attention is being paid to FAO's fiduciary and other obligations under the rules adopted by the Members. The development of FAO's new Strategic Framework 2022-31 is also incorporating the above.			
Recommendation 3: Closer links to the private sector, producer and consumer organizations, education and research institutes and philanthropic organizations are needed to act at scale. The specific strategy with the private sector might require a combination of high-level corporate diplomacy and arms-length engagement through multi-stakeholder platforms. The due diligence process could be adapted to the level of risk and hence to the size of the private entity involved, i.e. adopt a lighter process for partnerships with small-scale private entities than with multinationals.	Accepted	Modalities to strengthen collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia, etc. are being discussed as part of FAO's strategies for partnerships. FAO's new strategy for private sector engagement is expected to signal a shift to more systematic engagement to bring transformative changes essential to fulfil the SDGs by 2030 through more coordinated collective actions. The due diligence, risks and benefits assessment and risk mitigation processes are currently under review to be better fit-for-purpose.	DDG-Bechdol	2021	N
Recommendation 4: Beyond advocating for greater resource allocation to agriculture and food and nutrition security, there is also a need to improve upon policy, legal and educational environments to make them more coherent and more conducive to private investment in agriculture, as well as to strengthen the institutional capacity and resource efficiency in line ministries in order to make them more	Accepted	Progressively, FAO's support most frequently provided in partnership with other UN entities and stakeholders, has shifted towards more comprehensive and programmatic approaches, covering not only agriculture, but enabling the institutional environment conducive to identify the broad range of measures to sustain livelihood and encourage investments for inclusive development and economic growth. Renewed attention and	Chief Economist supported by Investment Centre/PSR	Ongoing	N

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effective at using their current resources and/or mobilizing new ones.		<p>support related to social protection and increased attention to nutrition education are among the areas where FAO is increasingly investing its energies. Assistance is also increasingly focused on capacitating institutional stakeholders and supporting their strategic planning, as to allow for comprehensive and integrated policy-making and cross-sectoral coordination.</p> <p>The priority given to better coordination of data, information and analysis and the Hand-in-Hand initiative are also contributing to the capacitation of national stakeholders by making evidence available, supporting their identification of priorities, and facilitating exchange of knowledge and experiences, including through South-South and Triangular Cooperation.</p> <p>The new approved headquarters structure, and the more strategic approach for resource mobilization will further expand the capacity for comprehensive evidence based interventions and for expanding the spectrum of private and public resources mobilized.</p>			
Recommendation 5: FAO should step up its efforts to mainstream the principle of “leave no one behind” into its programmes and projects, and to delineate what it can do, what entry points to use for each vulnerable group. The Country Gender Assessments could be extended to other vulnerable groups.	Accepted	Management is fully committed to ensuring vulnerable actors, adult and youth, women and men, rural and urban are supported to exploit their fullest potential as critical agents of change. Leaving no one behind and reducing inequalities is also a core theme of the new Strategic Framework 2022-31.	ESP/ESA	2021-22	N

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		<p>The strategy for partnership with civil society, the evaluation of which will be presented at PC 129, can provide views to better refine and strategize the work in support to those actors.</p> <p>It is important to note however, in the context of FAO's contribution to SDG2, that the principle of leaving no one behind can be fully realized through transformative change towards sustainable food systems, by ensuring appropriate measures are taken to realize sustainability in its economic, social and environmental dimensions. The Organization's reform of its structure and working modalities is another fundamental step to realize this approach.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 6: FAO should develop diversified strategies to help provide employment to the youth of both genders in food systems, building upon the youth desire for environmental sustainability, for fairer markets and trade, for modernization and for radical change to explore new modes of production, expand support to food producers (extension, input supply and mechanization, veterinary services, etc.) and improve on downstream aggregation and trade of food producers (farmer organisations, certification schemes, transformation, retail, etc.).</p>	Accepted	<p>With the establishment of the Youth Committee, the Organization started an internal discussion aiming at better targeting youth needs in FAO's work.</p> <p>Programmatically, priority has been given to broaden and upscale programmes and technical assistance related to youth role in rural transformation, under the responsibility of the inclusive rural transformation and gender equity division (ESP). The increased focus on the role of youth will be also enhanced by the newly established Office of Innovation. Further strengthening of youth engagement in extension and advisory services is being taken up through ongoing projects and normative works including those focusing on digitalization in extension. Policy</p>	ESP/ESF/OIN	Ongoing	N

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		and “how to do” briefs are also being developed to make extension and advisory services youth sensitive.			
Recommendation 7: A stronger policy engagement is required for FAO to rise to the challenges of the SDG era, and in particular to approach trade-offs between economic growth, equity and environmental sustainability. FAO should try and use to a greater extent its current tools and assets in social equity and inclusion, including the set of voluntary guidelines emanating from its Governing Bodies, which should be promoted at country level as an integral part of FAO’s values and value added.	Accepted	<p>A more programmatic and integrated policy approach is being promoted throughout the Organization, facilitated by the reformed structure of FAO, with horizontal and cross sectoral technical collaboration foreseen in HQ and decentralized levels.</p> <p>The establishment of comprehensive and inclusive programmes, such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative are in fact promoting stronger integrated policy approaches, based on solid evidence and analysis to help countries identify viable options, improve enabling environments, and map potential risks and trade-offs across different sectors and dimensions of sustainability.</p> <p>In the same vein, comprehensive programmes funded through voluntary contributions, such as FMM programmes, and the EU-FAO FIRST Programme also support countries in more comprehensive policy approaches and promote use of policy instruments and tools.</p> <p>The new Strategic Framework being developed for 2022-31 also highlights the importance of tools to minimize trade-offs.</p>	Chief Economist	2021-22	N
Recommendation 8: FAO has to become better at tailoring its global approaches to local contexts. To do so, it needs to identify clear and	Accepted	FAO is improving its capacity to analyze concrete needs and identify tailored interventions to achieve transformational change and achieve sustainable	Chief Economist DDG-Semedo	End-2021	N

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focused entry points, preferably through existing national and local priorities, policies and programmes. This includes territorial approaches (e.g. “Landscape for Life”, the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems) that focus on a specific geographic region. The optimal mix of interventions will depend on local circumstances and conditions and this emphasizes the importance of a full understanding of the local context to achieve the desired successful outcome at the least transaction cost.		development in its three dimensions. It is doing this by strengthening evidence based analysis and by making data, analysis, and multidisciplinary assistance available, including through increased collaboration among development actors and national stakeholders.	Regional and Country Offices		
Recommendation 9: Protecting and conserving biodiversity is key to prevent the spread of pathogens that can highly affect food and nutrition security, and FAO should expand its so far limited work in this area.	Accepted	FAO’s evidence- and science-based policy analysis highlights the importance of protecting and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems to ensure food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture as a whole. Recent analytical and policy work aimed at supporting countries in their response to COVID-19 also includes dedicated attention to biodiversity and ecosystems. The approved biodiversity mainstreaming strategy is a fundamental step to ensure biodiversity is mainstreamed across FAO’s work, and included comprehensively in the assistance provided to its members.	DDG-Semedo	Ongoing	N
Recommendation 10: To accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems, more work could be done to help markets valorize sustainable agricultural practices and biodiversity, through certification schemes,	Accepted	The establishment of the Food Systems and Food Safety division aims at providing the Organization with the hub for channeling knowledge and assistance to advance transformational change towards realizing sustainable food systems and fully	ESF in close collaboration with EST	2021-22	N

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social media campaigns, or even TV shows, cooks and gastronomic societies, etc.		contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda at all levels. The increased global commitment will be strengthened by the UN Food System Summit in 2021 to which FAO will contribute substantially, including by making evidence, analysis, and good practices available, and by encouraging members and partners to mobilize actions at all levels.			
Recommendation 11: An explicit, integrated knowledge management approach is required to help bridge cross-divisional divides, enhance interactions between staff based at headquarters, regional, sub-regional and country offices, and facilitate learning. A key element is to connect across countries and regions, and to build knowledge on what is already happening in the field. Having an explicit approach and standard tools to organize how such knowledge is acquired, transformed and packaged by groups at FAO (divisional, thematic, otherwise) could increase the effectiveness of transforming knowledge into focused policy recommendations and programmes. This is critical in a context where cost effectiveness is a major concern.	Accepted	The management agrees that effective knowledge management is key to allow for all FAO stakeholders to properly contribute to realizing the vision of a world free from hunger and malnutrition, and to allow for collection and analysis of evidence, lessons learned and experience sharing to be timely and widely disseminated and used by concerned actors, as well as to allow for the technical expertise of FAO to be deployed. The approved new structure and the establishment of programmes and initiatives, such as the HIHI and efforts to pull together information, evidence and analysis, will provide the Organization with the necessary tools to respond to the challenge.	DDG-Bechdol/ DDG-Semedo/ DDG-Thomas, in collaboration with Regional Offices	2021-22	N
Recommendation 12: Social media applications, digital innovations and information systems should be supported in a more service-oriented manner by corporate services.	Accepted	Management assigns high-priority to innovation, including digitalization and information technology – but also to many other forms of innovation such as new practices, entry in new markets, and business models – as essential elements to drive	DDG-Thomas/ CSI supported by OIN/OCC	2021-22	N

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		transformational change in food systems and rural development. The establishment of the Chief Scientist and Office of Innovation, to work in close coordination with the Chief Economist and technical divisions, aims at enabling FAO to harvest available information, knowledge and expertise, and to make innovation and most recent technology and science available to countries through research and technical assistance at all levels.			
Recommendation 13: FAO information systems should be geared to support the analytical base of FAO and partners at the country level, where knowledge creation and sharing actually happen and can be impactful, rather than have all the information centralised and analysed at Headquarters.	Accepted	The management is already in the process of rapidly upgrading its analytical base and capacity by creating new platforms that improve access to FAO data assets and analysis, including through the recently established geospatial platform supporting HHHI. The data and analysis developed in HQ and decentralized offices during the pandemic represents a first example of the increased capacity of FAO to make necessary evidence and information available to decision-makers to understand and address challenges to sustainable development. The support provided by members will be essential to sustain and further develop this work both at HQ and decentralized levels.	Chief Economist	2021-22	N
Recommendation 14: FAO's Strategic Framework needs to be revised in favour of a lighter, streamlined and more nimble architecture speaking more directly to the SDGs. It should delineate the key principles of the 2030 Agenda as well as FAO's role in implementing them. The new Strategic	Accepted	The ongoing review of the FAO strategic framework is fully aligned with this recommendation. Its core focus is to ensure full alignment with the 2030 Agenda, mapping FAO comparative advantages and consolidating priorities, as well as efficient and operational modalities for FAO's best contribution to sustainable development. Progress is being	OSP	2021	N

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Framework is also an opportunity to define a comprehensive accountability mechanism to hold senior management, divisional directors and FAO Representatives accountable for implementing the desired change, and to develop a harmonized, user-friendly, decentralized monitoring system.		periodically reported to Members, who provide guidance to FAO Management in a continuous cycle. The Strategic Framework will incorporate country-level results as defined in the context of the UNSDCFs and linked to the achievement of SDG targets and indicators. This will allow all FAO offices to use a common language, and facilitate measurement of FAO's interventions at all levels, by aggregating and rolling-up results from country, regional and global levels.			
Recommendation 15: Acting at scale, promoting holistic approaches and leaving no one behind would require additional technical and functional capacities that are currently insufficient within FAO, such as lawyers, policy analysts, sociologists, operations managers, and experts with a strong field exposure.	Accepted	The new structure and working modalities approved, including the establishment of flagship programmes and initiatives aims at enabling FAO to strategize its work, upscaling its capacity of intervention and support, and broadening the pull of partners and collaboration. An essential component of this work is the coordination of evidence and increased analytical capacity allowing for identification of opportunities, as well as addressing potential trade-offs of interventions at policy, programmatic and project level. Management will periodically undertake skills mix assessments to identify potential technical gaps and will strengthen its partnerships function to obtain tailored capacity support from academia and private sector.	OSP/CSH	Ongoing	Y