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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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**Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional
Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean (*cf. PC 115/4*)**

Guidance sought by the Programme Committee

The Programme Committee may wish to note progress on the recommendations accepted by Management.

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

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1. This report has been prepared in follow-up to the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean.¹
2. In line with FAO's policy on evaluations, this report provides an update on the status of the implementation of the actions set out in the Management Response. Upon request by the Office of Evaluation (OED), the report introduces a Management Action Record Scoring (MAR Score) on a six-point scale, in which FAO Management self-assessed the level of adoption and implementation of recommendations.

Overall progress in the implementation of all accepted recommendations

3. The document entitled "Decentralization and Decentralized Offices Network"² presented to the 34th Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean endorsed the principles and the general criteria for the revision of FAO's coverage. The Regional Conference's recommendations will be presented to the FAO Council at its session in June 2016. In the meantime, the region has reinforced the technical capacity of the subregional offices through the transfer of technical officers following a skill mix review. In the case of SLM (Panama), this exercise basically doubled the technical capacity of the office.
4. As requested in the Evaluation, the scope of decentralization, including the respective roles and responsibilities of the three layers (regional, subregional and country) according to the principle of subsidiarity, has been clarified among the staff. Furthermore, issuance of the revised Project Cycle Guide and the TCP Manual has addressed the requirement to clarify the approval process of technical cooperation programmes and eliminate redundant steps.
5. Many countries, across all regions, are currently entering the second country programming framework (CPF) cycle. To support the process, the guidance for CPF preparation was improved and updated to reflect a more structured and strategically aligned approach.
6. On recommendation 4, Management agreed with the principle, but not with the specific suggestions. While planning at the subregional level continues to take place, all work contributes to the Strategic Objectives of the Organization.
7. Regarding the efficient and effective management of the Field Programme, Management partially agreed with the recommendation. In particular, Management did not support the creation of a "Reserve Fund" as the Financial Regulations provide sufficient flexibility. A transparent model has been implemented to authorize and distribute TCP resources in the region.
8. On recommendation 6, Management agreed that the operational and financial management of the Regular Programme and Field Programme deserve continuous attention. In this regard, work is in progress to respond to some of the recommendations. In particular, a new Cost Recovery Policy was approved by the governing bodies in 2015 for progressive implementation from 2016. A Resource Mobilization Officer has been transferred to SLM and a CPF monitoring system has been developed.
9. The Regional Office has organized training and capacity building opportunities to improve the design and implementation of field project evaluation. All normative products are available on FAO's Web site.
10. A regional Gender Officer was appointed in 2014 to support the office in responding to gender inequalities in the region. An Action Plan for incorporating gender in each of the Strategic Objectives work plans has been developed and implemented.

¹ PC 115/4; PC 115/4 Sup.1

² LARC/16/6

Follow-up report on the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean matrix

Accepted evaluation recommendations (a)	Action Agreed in the Management Response (b)	Description of actions actually taken, or reasons for actions not taken (c)	MAR score (d) *	Impact of, or changes resulted from taken actions (e)
<p>Recommendation 1 - FAO Senior Management at Headquarters and the RLC should consolidate FAO presence in the region. In order to do so, it should adopt new working models to adapt to the financial reality and the Organization's requirements to provide efficient and effective services to member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.</p> <p>2. Rebalance the location of Technical Officers in Santiago, Chile, and in Panama.</p> <p>3. The arrangement of Representations being managed by designated Technical Officers should be discontinued.</p>	<p>Management accepts the Recommendation and supports many of the suggested measures. However, with regard to suggested measure 4, governing body guidance will be required on questions of country presence.</p>	<p>The document "Decentralization and Decentralized Offices Network" presented at the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean will lay the framework to reviewing FAO's presence in the region. The Regional Conference endorsed the principles and general criteria of the document for the revision of FAO's coverage. The Regional Conferences recommendations will be presented to the FAO Council in June 2016.</p> <p>2. Between 2014 and March 2016, six professional staff have been transferred to Panama, effectively doubling the number of technical officers in the Subregional Office. This list includes the following officers: Agrifood-Systems, Nutrition, South-South Cooperation, Food Security, Natural Resources and a Statistician.</p> <p>3. For the region, this is only the case of Argentina. However, the designation of Technical Officers placed in a country without FAOR functions is currently part of the analysis related to the review of decentralization.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Member countries have responded in a constructive manner at the opportunity to review FAO's country presence based on the national priorities and needs.</p> <p>While some of these transitions are still in process, the increase of technical capacity in the Subregional Office responds to the needs of the subregion, bringing FAO closer to where hunger is prevalent and reducing travel costs.</p>

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<p>4. RLC should consider establishing multiple-accreditation systems, with a view to managing the portfolios of two or more countries. This recommendation could be applied to the following three groups of countries: Caribbean countries; Costa Rica; and Argentina, Chile and Uruguay in South America.</p> <p>5. The aggregate technical profile of the current staff of Technical Officers in the region and subregions should be defined to manage the five new Strategic Objectives effectively and efficiently within the region. The strengthening of the Subregional Office for Mesoamerica should also be prioritized in the short term. ... Senior Management of FAO and RLC should restructure technical services and teams, in terms of specializations and geographical location. These teams should consider adopting truly multidisciplinary working arrangements and structures.</p> <p>6. It is recommended that RLC and TCE strengthen the presence of Disaster Risk Management Officers in Central America and the Caribbean.</p>		<p>4. The review of the decentralized country network was a subject presented at the Regional Conference in March 2016. The Regional Conference suggested as valid options to be considered by member countries the multiple accreditation and the Partnerships and Liaison Offices schemes.</p> <p>5. Measures were carried out in line with the approach adopted to achieve the reviewed Strategic Framework in the region following the skill mix exercise. Following the recent addition of technical officers in Panama, the technical unit was restructured to strengthen the support within the subregion. In addition, taking advantage of the corporate mobility exercise, three officers were outposted to the Caribbean subregion.</p> <p>6. An Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Operations Specialist international consultant is based in Panama and provides services to SLM and SLC. TCE recently appointed a Disaster Risk Management Coordinator to RLC.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p>	<p>Countries can determine which office agreement best fits their needs and options presented.</p> <p>Evidence is most manifest in Mesoamerica where the largest concentration of priority countries is located. The recent naming of a new Subregional Coordinator has galvanized FAO's focus direction, and actions.</p> <p>These posts respond to the need for emergency support following natural disasters.</p>

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7. OSD, in collaboration with FAO Legal and Ethics Office (LEG), should review the existing Host Agreement arrangements at country level and formulate a plan to update them or sign new agreements where necessary in a reasonable timeframe.		7. The discussion of the Decentralization document at the Regional Conference and follow-up Council decisions will clarify the organizational priorities. Work will continue in updating or developing Host Country Agreements, including establishing Partnership and Liaison Offices or multiple accreditation schemes.	3	OSD is actively working to update Host Country Agreements.
<p>Recommendation 2 - The Evaluation Team recommends that FAO senior management quickly implement an exhaustive process to clarify the scope of decentralization among its staff in the region, including on the roles and responsibilities between the three layers existing in RLC (regional, subregional and country) and HQ.</p> <p>1. Emphasizing and clarifying the roles of the three levels of decentralized office (regional, subregional and national) and the subsidiarity criteria among them. This process should include a clarification of the role of Technical Officers that highlights their main function of supporting the implementation of FAO</p>	Accepted	1. The booklet “Decentralized Offices” prepared in 2015 clarifies the roles and responsibilities at each level.	5	The document was shared and distributed to subregional offices and country offices and needs to be further disseminated and discussed within the region.

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<p>programmes in countries and providing advice at that level.</p> <p>2. Clarifying the approval process for Technical Cooperation Programmes and to eliminate redundant steps.</p> <p>3. Improving communication and enhancing training on FAO contractual arrangements in Country Offices.</p>		<p>2. The approval process is fully aligned with the new Project Cycle as well as the new TCP Manual as of 2015.</p> <p>3. The HR trainings on recruitment with HR focal points from across South America; the consultant contractual lifecycle training to RLC Supervisors; and the establishment of the GS Staff Selection Committee for RLC have contributed to improved capacity around contractual arrangements in the region.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Significant improvements have taken place in this area over the past year.</p> <p>This is an ongoing process as new people come into the organization and changes to the procedures take effect; yet much progress was made in this area.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 - FAO Senior Management at headquarters and the Regional Office should strengthen the use of Country Programming Frameworks (CPF) as the main instrument for establishing working arrangements and priorities in countries.</p> <p>2. Country Representatives must prioritize: 1) defining indicators, targets and baselines for the level of expected results; 2) establishing mechanisms for providing progress reports to governments; 3)</p>	<p>The CPF is the basis for all FAO activities at the country level. FAO's results framework is built around a single "line of sight" that connects the five Strategic Objectives with CPFs.</p>	<p>2. 13 of 33 CPFs follow the new CPF guidelines as of December 2015. This continues to be a work in progress.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>The consultative nature of the process, placed within the confines of strict time limits, has facilitated a rich</p>

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<p>integrating a portfolio-management approach to generate synergies and complementarities; 4) estimating needs in terms of mobilization of resources and the actions needed to obtain them.</p> <p>3. Country Representations should develop short-term plans to disseminate their CPFs among the United Nations System Country Team, other donors and multilateral agencies in the country and wider sectors within host governments.</p>		<p>3. Both the CPF and the Annual Reports have been streamlined to reflect a more structured and strategically aligned approach. The communication component is an ongoing area of work.</p>	5	<p>exchange that has led to the development of higher quality documents.</p> <p>CPF results are visible, the Annual Reports are under review and revision; outcomes look very promising but have not been fully assessed as of the time of this reporting.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4 - FAO Senior Management at the headquarters and at the Regional Office should consolidate the regional sphere as the priority intermediary between country-level and global priority-setting and planning, as well as adopting some efficiency measures as part of their processes.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle Management agrees with the spirit of Recommendation 4, but does not agree with the first suggested measure. The second suggested measure falls beyond the scope of Management's decision and is an issue for Members' review and decision.</p>			

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<p>1. This Evaluation found no grounds for recommending prioritizing areas and resources at the subregional level.</p> <p>2. It is recommended that RLC and OSD consider options for a more efficient organization of the Regional Conference, for the Organization and for member countries. In this context, priority should be given to disseminating the new strategic framework among member country governments (including Ministries of Agriculture and other ministerial bodies).</p>		<p>1. Starting in 2014 resources at the subregional level were allocated by SOs on the Regular Programme side; starting in 2016 all actions in country must be allocated by time and resources to an SO. In other words, while planning at the subregional level continues to take place, all work contributes to the Strategic Objectives results.</p> <p>2. Starting in 2014 during the Regional Conference in Santiago, followed by the implementation of CPF under the new system, and regular intervention by FAORs in countries; the knowledge and understanding of FAOs Strategic Framework has increased substantially.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>5</p>	<p>This gradual approach has enabled an easier adoption of a change measure than would have been the case, had it been carried out at once.</p> <p>Changes at the Regional Conferences are taking place; the outcomes of the last two Conferences have been very positive, and the outcomes of the forthcoming one are expected with anticipation. This increased understanding has also led to an increased line of accountability between Member States and FAO at the corporate, region, and country levels.</p>

<p>Recommendation 5 – It is recommended that FAO manage the Field Programme with strict effectiveness and efficiency criteria.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted Management agrees that the field programme must be managed with strict effectiveness and efficiency criteria and will continue to apply and improve the related measures accordingly. Management does not support the suggestion to create a “Reserve Fund”, as the Financial Regulations provide sufficient flexibility to manage resources without resorting to a “reserve fund” for the field programme. Likewise, Management does not believe that there is scope to consider the “automatic preliminary allocation” of TCP resources for country activities beyond the regional level, as proposed in the second “suggested measure” associated</p>			
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<p>1. RLC, with support from TCS and OSP, should monitor the Field Programme with explicit portfolio-management criteria and appropriate and up-to-date financial information. The Field Programme must have its own accounts, without prejudice to an integrated portfolio management. Its costs should be completely funded by the Programme itself. As recommended by many internal audits, this Evaluation supports the creation of a “Reserve Fund” in order to provide sustainability, a predictable time frame, innovation potential and to hedge against temporary funding shortfalls for field presence.</p> <p>2. The Evaluation recommends that RLC establish clear and transparent criteria for distributing regional allocations under Technical Cooperation Programmes. A substantial proportion should be subject to an automatic preliminary allocation according to variables relevant to FAO operations in the region (the Evaluation considered per capita gross national income, Atlas methodology, extreme</p>	<p>with this Recommendation.</p>	<p>1. A consultative process for review following the establishment of the RLC Management Team that involves the three Subregional Coordinators, as well as technical and functional officers in RLC and subregions has led to increased knowledge from the players involved. Ample room for growth remains, yet progress has been made.</p> <p>2. A TCP resource distribution model was developed as follows: 1st level involves the FAO Representatives and their team in negotiating and drafting of the CPF; 2nd level involves a time-bound review by the SO leads; 3rd level involves a final quality assurance check by the RLC Management Team. The system, now in place for some time, has worked well and is entirely aligned with the Strategic Framework.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Evidence to date indicates the changes implemented have been well received, the process very transparent, and the outcomes of high quality.</p>

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<p>poverty rates and under-nutrition rates).</p> <p>3. It is recommended that the RLC establish an advisory board made up of regional FAO representatives to advise on issues relating to the allocation of resources under regional and subregional Technical Cooperation Programmes.</p>		<p>3. The TCP Advisory board function is carried out by the Management Team. It in turn reviews, prioritizes and supports funding of TCPs across the region.</p>	6	Fully functioning.
<p>Recommendation 6 – FAO should improve the operational and financial management of the Regular Programme and Field Programme in the region.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted</p> <p>Management agrees that continuous attention should be given to improving the operational and financial management to all programmes. However, it does not support the suggested measures, in particular, those regarding the distribution and use of reimbursements for project administrative and operational support (AOS). A comprehensive review of the policy</p>			

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<p>1. RLC, with support from OSP, should collect relevant financial information for ongoing monitoring of the progress of operations and portfolio management. Information on expenditure (disbursements) by year, unit of analysis, source of funds and use thereof is vital for regular evaluations of the effectiveness and cost efficiency of the portfolio. This Evaluation made considerable efforts to compile the first database for 2004-2012 and to</p>	<p>regarding project support costs is being undertaken during 2013-14 at the request of the Finance Committee (JM 2013.2/3 and FC 151/8 refer). Therefore, the distribution and use of AOS reimbursements proposed in the second suggested measure cannot be accepted, nor can its use to consolidate a proposed "reserve fund" be agreed (see recommendation 5.1).</p>	<p>1. The strategic planning function has been restructured into a single function, integrating regional, subregional and country-level programmes. The monitoring function is coordinated by the region but implemented at each level.</p>	4	<p>Planning coordination has increased exponentially and facilitated the capacity of the region to achieve coordinated results. Monitoring remains an area to be strengthened, the ongoing development of</p>

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<p>develop a few indicators for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the portfolio management. FAO could benefit from adopting, adding to, continuing and stepping up such endeavours in the short and medium term.</p> <p>2. Management of information on AOS should be dramatically restructured as soon as possible. This Evaluation recommends that AOS obtained from field operation support should be clearly and transparently recorded as part of the Field Programme, then rapidly and regularly allocated and under no circumstances retained at headquarters. The Evaluation recommends that AOS collected should be distributed as follows: a) 60% to the unit responsible for the mobilization of funding; b) 20% to RLC; and c) 20% for headquarters in Rome. AOS distributed according to the criteria of this recommendation should help to consolidate the “Reserve Fund” described in suggested measure 5.1.</p> <p>3. It is recommended that RLC establish a results-monitoring function associated with regional priorities and those of the CPFs.</p>		<p>FAO governing bodies approved a new Cost Recovery Policy in 2015 that is being implemented in 2016 to recover Direct Support Costs and Indirect Operating Costs in a more transparent manner.</p> <p>3. A monitoring system was developed in consultation with CIO for CPF oversight that is in line with the Strategic Framework.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>5</p>	<p>corporate monitoring tools plays an important role in this area.</p> <p>Working well.</p>

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<p>The region is the most appropriate level for this function.</p> <p>4. It is recommended that FAO maintain a support structure for GRMS at RLC and the development of all modules, with a view to helping improve efficiency in regional operations.</p> <p>5. Given the growing importance of the Field Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the fact that it is increasingly funded by contributions from the region's own countries, RLC, with the support of TCS, should develop an institutional resource mobilization strategy that includes assigning specialized officers for the strategy and the close involvement of Country Representatives. An integrated approach to the role of FAO in South-South Cooperation should be devised in this context. The mobilization of resources should be included as a strategic sector in CPFs and in the recruitment of Country Representatives and Technical Officers in the region.</p>		<p>4. GRMS support is a corporate requirement, one that is necessary in order to maintain the administrative scaffolding for the Strategic Framework to be put into practice. RLC has in place a two-person team to address recurring system issues across the region.</p> <p>5. A P2 Resource Mobilization Officer was transferred from headquarters to RLC some years ago. Starting January 2016 the Officer was transferred to SLM where she serves the needs of the entire region.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>6</p>	<p>Support provided to the region is good, what is not guaranteed is financial support for its continuity over time.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 7 - It is recommended that Regional Management improve the design and implementation of field project evaluation, as well as implementing mechanisms to ensure improve management of knowledge and normative products generated by decentralized offices.</p> <p>1. In terms of specific projects evaluated, it is recommended that the heads of Multidisciplinary Teams and Country Representatives ensure a design guaranteed to have an impact on national policy at the local or national level. As far as the pilot project developed as part of Strategic Objective 1 is concerned, it is recommended that RLC carry out an exhaustive evaluation of the design, processes and results before implementing it at the regional level.</p> <p>2. As for the production and dissemination of normative products, it is recommended that RLC centralizes the material available on a website, informs potential users and includes a counter of searches and downloads</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>1. A regional workshop was carried out at RLC with country focal points in 2015 to train and build capacity across the region. Shortly thereafter, a regional focal point was hired and oversees the process in coordination SOs.</p> <p>2. In the last two years, RLC has been disseminating this information in a workspace, accessible from the local Intranet. This space allows users to be always informed and updated on all the normative products (user guide manuals, sites, others) required for the production and dissemination of publications; statistical information on downloads is an area than can be further strengthened.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Ongoing work that is progressing with positive outcomes.</p> <p>The system is working is working and servicing the needs required, but it can be further improved.</p>

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to monitor usage. The information strategy should use adverts and summaries that appeal directly to the target audience. The communications strategy should define target populations and diversify the channels used.				
Recommendation 8 - FAO should immediately produce an action plan for eliminating existing gender inequality, including goals, targets, time frames and resources. There should be a substantial increase in the number of women among Country Representatives, and women should also reach higher salary brackets (given that they have the required skills).	Accepted	A P4 Gender Officer was appointed for the region in 2014, the region also took part in the first conference on policies promoting rural women's rights, economic autonomy, and gender rights. The region also developed and implemented an Action Plan for incorporating gender in each of the Strategic Objectives work plans. Through the CELAC Food and Nutrition Security plan, gender has been a key area of work across the region. Policy work on gender and agriculture has been a top agenda item for countries across the region.	6	Considering where the region was prior to the incorporation of the Gender Officer; progress in this area has been exponential.

* **1 - None:** no action was taken to implement the recommendation; **2 - Poor:** plan and actions for implementation of the recommendation are at a very preliminary stage; **3 - Inadequate:** implementation of the recommendation is uneven and partial; **4 - Adequate:** implementation of the recommendation has progressed; there is no evidence yet of its results on the intended target; **5 - Good:** the recommendation has been fully implemented and there is some initial evidence of its impact on the intended target; **6 - Excellent:** there is solid evidence that the recommendation has had a positive impact on its intended target