

## 42nd Session of the Conference

### **Introduction to Item 17: Programme Evaluation Report 2021**

I am pleased to present the Programme Evaluation Report 2021, which summarizes the main outputs and highlights of more than 90 independent evaluations conducted by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) in the period 2019-2020. These include evaluations of 15 country programmes, 70 projects and programmes (about 50 percent of which have a major resilience and emergency component), and 10 thematic evaluations, including FAO's statistical work, the Strategic Results Framework, the FAO Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations, and the FAO Strategy for Partnerships with the Private Sector, as well as the first evaluations in a series on FAO's contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

OED has made major contributions to key developments in FAO during the reporting period: for instance, the Evaluation of the Strategic Results Framework has informed the preparation of the Strategic Framework 2022-31, highlighting areas for improvement and pointing out key aspects on which the new framework could be built. The establishment of issue-based programmatic areas of work, the creation of an SDG Office, the development of a change management plan – to name a few – were recommendations made by this evaluation that have been taken up by Management and Members. Likewise, evaluations of FAO's support to SDG2 and SDG13 have provided specific suggestions for improving FAO's positioning and contribution to the achievement of Agenda 2030 and Climate Change-related commitments. This was complemented with a range of evaluability assessments, syntheses and ad-hoc advice towards a more evidence-based strategic framework for the Organization.

The rapidly evolving international context and changes within the Organization placed new demands on OED during the biennium, and the Office made efforts to deliver relevant and timely inputs at global, regional and country levels. This has included the development of a new approach to country programme evaluations, with more linkages and synergies with the United Nations development system (UNDS) reform, as well as increased efforts to develop the evaluation culture and capacities in developing countries, in particular through an active online Community of Practice, *EvalForward*. Other areas of work include the commissioning of five regional syntheses of evaluations, capturing lessons learned across evaluations in the regions; as well as plans for implementation of decentralization of evaluations to regional and country offices. In addition, considerable efforts were made to adapt ways of working in response to the COVID-19 pandemic through rethinking the evaluation process and creating a series of criteria to this end. Evaluators had to reinvent ways of observing the results, substantiating the evidence and remotely engaging with stakeholders that are core to its field missions. They also had to work around the limited availability of programme stakeholders overwhelmed with new, urgent priorities.

#### **Summary Findings and highlights from evaluations (2019-2020):**

Main findings from evaluations pointed to the increased collaborative approach to the UNDS reform process. FAO has been broadening the scope and diversity of its products, albeit slowly, and adopting more holistic methodologies, such as the agri-food systems approach. However, there has been an over-reliance on pilot projects, lacking the partnerships and resource mobilization for upscaling, and country offices often had limited programmatic footprint, operating capacity and private-sector links.

Almost 80 percent of the projects evaluated in 2019-2020 contributed directly to environmental and climate change-related targets. Evaluations found that FAO has created tools, databases, guidance and learning materials to enhance national capacity to design, implement and report actions in line with global climate agreements, as well as to access funding. FAO was also pivotal in securing the inclusion of

agriculture in global negotiations on climate change and linking agriculture to Nationally Determined Contributions.

The evaluation of FAO's contribution to the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus was a significant addition to FAO's efforts to develop an effective and innovative Strategic Framework, centred on the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda and “leaving no one behind”. The evaluation recognized that FAO's work to prioritize and implement a HDP approach was rooted in its country-level operation, and found the Organization's internal understanding of the HDP nexus to be fragmented. Other evaluations in this area of work highlighted that support to the most vulnerable groups required improvement. FAO's portfolio on forced migration increased significantly in 2020 and, despite many good practices, would benefit from a systematic approach. . The Organization also made some progress on gender equality, far outpacing its work with other marginalized groups. Evaluations found that FAO had become more gender aware thanks to a number of measures, including the introduction of gender markers, resulting in more gender-responsive projects across FAO.

The evaluations of partnership arrangements with the private sector and the civil society organizations revealed the need for expanding collaboration with non-state stakeholders/organizations, and called for improving strategies and mechanisms for their engagement in the FAO efforts contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

The FAO Office of Evaluation, over the next biennium, will continue to innovate to increase utility and learning of its evaluations. In particular, it will engage more closely with experts and institutions based in countries to conduct evaluative work at country level, with a view to enhancing the sustainability of its contribution to FAO and its Members.

**Masahiro Igarashi**  
**Director, FAO Office of Evaluation**  
Email: [OED-Director@fao.org](mailto:OED-Director@fao.org)  
[www.fao.org/evaluation](http://www.fao.org/evaluation)