



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
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para la  
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y la  
Alimentación

## PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

### Hundred and Second Session

Rome, 27 – 31 July 2009

### Progress Report on the Evaluation of Strategy D.2: Conservation, Rehabilitation and Development of Environments at the Greatest Risk<sup>1</sup>

#### A. CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION AND OF ITS FOLLOW UP

1. Strategic Objective D.2 *Conservation, rehabilitation and development of environments at the greatest risk* addresses conditions where environmental capacity and ecosystem integrity are critical constraints.
2. The D.2 mandate covers four components: i) monitoring and assessing fragile ecosystems, and developing management criteria; ii) enhancing institutional and planning capacity and promoting use of social, economic and environmental costing in policies and programmes; iii) promoting sustainable development, conservation and rehabilitation of fragile ecosystems and areas; and iv) assisting in the implementation of international conventions and agreements, and of relevant chapters of *Agenda 21*.
3. When defined by habitat, Strategy D.2 concerns a significant portion of the Earth resources and dependent populations – in particular mountains, drylands and coastal systems.

#### B. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION AND OF THE ORIGINAL MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

4. A general finding of the evaluation, which took place in 2006, was that the strategic objective was not well reflected in FAO's operational structures and approaches and not sufficiently considered by staff to be a point of reference for priorities and actions. However,

<sup>1</sup> PC 96/4 b); PC 96/4 b) Sup. 1

strength was found in FAO's monitoring programmes and its development of methodologies, primarily resource assessments, management approaches, guidelines and information outputs. There was some capacity building carried out, but was not always in a D.2 context. The promotion of sustainable development and some rehabilitation activities were noted.

5. The evaluation contained six main findings and recommendations:
  1. FAO's engagement with D.2 issues is important and will remain so, but the functions could be absorbed into FAO's broader aims.
  2. A framework with priorities, goals and indicators could be useful.
  3. Innovations such as economic valuation could be given greater emphasis.
  4. FAO should aim for larger size and longer duration D.2-type projects.
  5. Criteria and measures for the stewardship of key systems and for developing sustainable livelihoods could be useful.
  6. FAO's comparative advantages should be spelled out more clearly.
6. Management offered the following views on the recommendations:
7. Recommendation 1: Management held the view that retaining D.2 as a distinct strategic objective in FAO's framework would enhance the ability of the Organization to direct its human and financial resources toward issues which have taken on global importance and visibility. Examples include initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals, UN multilateral environmental agreements, the Global Environment Facility, and the Commission on Sustainable Development. Absorbing the objective into the broader aims of FAO would signal to internal and external partners that fragile ecosystems and environments at risk are no longer a priority of the Organization.
8. Recommendation 2: Although the absence of an operational framework constrained FAO from taking a lead role in D.2, management did not agree "there is little evidence of FAO's strategic leadership" and cited cases such as desertification, mountains and marine ecosystems where the Organization consistently engaged and led at technical and policy levels. Progress had been achieved with respect to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the ecosystem approach to fisheries management which have been mainstreamed. More progress was needed in other fragile ecosystems such as dryland areas, mountains, transboundary river basins, and lakes and wetlands as future environments at risk.
9. Recommendation 3: Management agreed that increased emphasis on economic valuation and ecosystem goods and services, particularly in fragile ecosystems was justified and viable. Recent work on markets for ecosystem goods and services (e.g. payments for environmental services) to benefit the poor and marginal groups and reduce pressure on vulnerable ecosystems were offered as examples. Management offered the view that the "ecosystem approach" could be useful for integrating natural resources management in fragile ecosystems and environment at risk. This was endorsed by the Programme Committee.
10. Recommendation 4: Larger and longer duration projects were appropriate if the financial support was available. GEF-supported projects in sustainable land management in sub-Saharan Africa (TerrAfrica, which has three years' duration), the Global Assessment of Land Degradation (LADA, which has 4 years' duration) and watershed management in mountain/highland ecosystems (Fouta Djallon, which has ten years' duration) were offered as examples where significant financial resources had been mobilised over several years.
11. Recommendation 5: Action had been taken through interdepartmental mechanisms to focus FAO's technical expertise on development challenges and respond to countries' and external partners' needs in fragile ecosystems. The FAO livelihood support programme was one example. At global level, FAO chaired the UN group on national and global indicators for Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 9 which addresses environmental issues.
12. Recommendation 6: Management considered that improved definition at entity level of FAO's comparative advantage with respect to fragile ecosystems and environments at risk was feasible. This was especially true for topics such as agro-biodiversity, good agricultural practices,

sustainable land management, rural livelihoods, and watershed management. Cross-sectoral mechanisms and programming could facilitate the definition and realisation of FAO's comparative advantage.

### **C. VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE (96<sup>TH</sup> SESSION, SEPTEMBER 2006)<sup>2</sup>**

13. The Committee acknowledged the methodological difficulty of evaluating the D.2 topic but considered that some of the critical findings in the report could have been better substantiated and that work being done by other UN system organizations could have featured more prominently. This would serve to highlight FAO's comparative advantage.

14. Note was taken of the view expressed by senior management that FAO was able to provide technical subject matter competence which was not present in other programmes of the UN system addressing fragile ecosystems.

15. The Committee agreed that a framework should be established for FAO and its partners to define priorities, establish goals and specify indicators in D.2-related areas; including work like economic valuation and ecosystem goods and services; and that longer duration projects should be sought.

16. It also agreed that a re-formulated Strategic Framework should continue to feature a Strategic Objective directed at fragile ecosystems. The Committee welcomed management's intention to develop a coordinated overall strategy to address the strategic objective and felt such a strategy should embrace an ecosystem approach to development, giving priority to FAO's role in promoting policy dialogue at country level and capacity building. A unifying programme entity in the new programme structure was seen to be a helpful development.

### **D. ELEMENTS OF THE NEW RESULTS HIERARCHY RELATING TO THE CONSERVATION, REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTS AT THE GREATEST RISK**

17. The Independent External Evaluation of FAO referred to environments at risk and fragile zones, including those requiring more frequent emergency responses.

18. The new FAO Strategic Framework<sup>3</sup> and Medium Term Plan<sup>4</sup> which are submitted to this Committee, include important elements formerly contained in Strategic Objective D.2 - with regard to Strategic Objective E: *Sustainable management of forests and trees* which make reference to mountain ecosystems and organizational result E6; and particularly to Strategic Objective F: *Sustainable management of land, water and genetic resources and improved responses to global environmental challenges affecting food and agriculture*.

19. Organizational result F1: Countries promoting and developing sustainable land management and F5: Countries have strengthened capacities to address emerging environmental challenges, such as climate change and bioenergy include explicit references to the four main strategy components of D.2. These are expected to be further elaborated as work begins with the next FAO Programme of Work and Budget 2010-11.

### **E. THE WAY FORWARD**

20. The evaluation of Strategic Objective D.2 in 2006, generated numerous opportunities to further develop this important theme, namely:

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<sup>2</sup> CL 131/12

<sup>3</sup> PC 102/2 – FC 128/11

<sup>4</sup> PC 102/2 – FC 128/11 a)

21. First, greater priority was given to monitoring and assessing the natural resources and environments at risk, including existing early warning systems, forest resources, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The collaborative UN programme (FAO/UNDP/UNEP) on reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation is one example of new partnerships which have emerged during the past two years.

22. Second, FAO expanded its innovative work in topics such as application of the ecosystem approach to forestry and recommended that such approach be developed for agriculture. The resource book "*The new generation of watershed management programmes and projects*" has received considerable attention and is the basis for a number of field projects in mountain areas which are being developed or under implementation. Similarly, work on payments for environmental services is underway, especially with a view toward supporting rural communities for the role they can play in the sustainable management of carbon stocks.

23. Third, existing work related to sustainable agriculture development, land and water management and conservation and rehabilitation of fragile ecosystems has influenced the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, including its recommendations to countries for actions related to investment, capacity building, and environmental governance. FAO's participation in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity, climate change and desertification have also led to expanded partnerships to assist countries.

24. Fourth, at the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the Committee on Agriculture (Rome, 22-25 April 2009) Members considered the paper "Agriculture and Environmental Challenges of the Twenty-first Century: A Strategic Approach for FAO<sup>5</sup>". Based on their discussions, COAG recommended, *inter alia*, that FAO strengthen its work in areas such as biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Committee stressed that an ecosystem approach be adopted in agricultural management in order to promote agro-ecosystem diversification and carbon sequestration in order to achieve sustainable agriculture.

25. Fifth, FAO continues to host the Secretariat of the Mountain Partnership, a voluntary global alliance for sustainable mountain development which was launched in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The Partnership has continued to evolve and has successfully attracted budgetary support for work in fragile mountain ecosystems.

26. In the light of the above and the ongoing reform processes, FAO will face additional opportunities to expand its work related to the conservation, rehabilitation and development of environments at the greatest risk. Priorities could include expanded monitoring and assessment of fragile ecosystems, developing elements for applying an ecosystem approach in agriculture, enhancing institutional capacity and promoting environmentally sustainable policies and programmes. Effective interdepartmental mechanisms, external partnerships and funding initiatives which link Regular Programme with extra-budgetary resources, contribute to ensuring that environments at risk, in particular mountains, drylands and coastal systems, continue to play central roles.

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<sup>5</sup> COAG 2009/3