



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

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

COUNCIL

Hundred and Thirty-first Session

Rome, 20 – 25 November 2006

Report of the Ninety-sixth Session of the Programme Committee
Rome, 25 - 29 September 2006

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REPORT OF THE NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

25 – 29 September 2006

Introduction

1. The Committee submits to the Council the following report of its Ninety-sixth Session.
2. The following Members were present:

Chairperson: Mr V. Heard (United Kingdom)
Vice-Chairperson: H.E. M. Arvelo Caamaño (Dominican Republic)
Members: Mr A.R. Ayazi (Afghanistan)
Ms J. Barfield (Australia)
Mr J. Melanson (Canada)
Mr R. Parasuram (India)
Ms Z. Budhan (Jamaica)
Mr S.A. Essa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Mr R. Recide (Philippines)
Mr G.G. Lombin (Nigeria)
Ms V.B. Titi (South Africa)

3. The session was opened by the Vice-Chairperson, H.E. M. Arvelo Caamaño (Dominican Republic) following the resignation of H.E. M. Wyatt (United Kingdom) as Chairperson of the Committee. The Committee was informed that the following new representatives on the Programme Committee had been respectively designated by their governments: Ms. Z. Budhan for Jamaica and Mr. V. Heard for the United Kingdom. The Committee was further informed that Mr S.A. Essa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) was replacing H.E. A.A. Zaied who was regrettably unable to attend this 96th Session. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the contribution made by Ambassador Wyatt in guiding the work of the Committee and also for the contribution made by Mr. Zenny to the work of the Committee.
4. The Committee proceeded to elect Mr V. Heard as Vice-Chairperson of the Committee and, following the subsequent resignation of H.E. M. Arvelo Caamaño as Vice-Chair acting as Chair, Mr Heard assumed the Chair. H.E. M. Arvelo Caamaño was subsequently re-elected as Vice-Chairperson with Mr. V. Heard assuming the role of Vice-Chair acting as Chair.

Adoption of the Agenda¹ and Timetable²

5. The Agenda and Timetable for the meeting were approved.

Item 2: Programme Implementation Report 2004-05³

6. The Committee recalled that the prime purpose of the PIR was to meet accountability requirements to Members of FAO's activities in a given biennium, covering both resources' utilization and delivery of outputs. It recognized that an assessment of results and impacts was covered by auto-evaluation and independent evaluation programmes and thematic evaluations. In

¹ PC 96/1

² PC 96/INF/1

³ C 2007/8

this light, the Committee commented on the content and format of the PIR 2004-05 and encouraged further improvements in future reports.

7. The Committee welcomed the shorter and more focused document and noted that the PIR 2004-05 took due account of previous guidance from the membership. In particular, it appreciated the positive manner in which achievements were reported, and the integration of reporting on regional dimensions and extrabudgetary resources at the programme level.

8. The Committee expressed general satisfaction at the reported achievements in the 2004-05 biennium, including full utilization of budgeted resources. It received clarification on the significant reductions in planned outputs between the 2002-03 and 2004-05 biennia and on the possible reasons why outputs actually delivered exceeded planned outputs in the adjusted PWB 2004-05. It noted that these were nevertheless fewer than originally foreseen at zero real growth levels. The Committee observed with concern the decline in outputs produced relating to Coordination and Information Exchange and Direct Advice to Members. It received clarification on the extent of direct advice to Members provided under Programme 2.5.2: *Gender and Population*, and the unintentional omission of the Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries held in conjunction with COFI. Members suggested that Ministerial Meetings in the future should not be convened automatically, but only when there was justification for Ministers' engagement. The Committee was pleased with the continued improvement in language coverage of meetings.

9. The Committee noted the modest increase in extrabudgetary expenditures and the higher level of support cost income. It was advised that the Secretariat has presented a proposal to the Finance Committee for the increase in PSC rate of projects in direct support to the Regular Programme from 6% to 13%.

10. The Committee paid particular attention to reporting on Major Programme 4.1: *Technical Cooperation Programme*, where expenditure had reached its highest level ever. To fully appreciate the contribution of the TCP projects to building the capacities of countries to access the technical work of the Organization, it requested a more in-depth analysis on the contribution of TCP projects to areas within FAO's mandate, including their overall catalytic role and relation to FAO's programmes, in particular through support to capacity-building, as well as reporting on regional dimensions. It was confirmed that all TCP projects were associated with one or other of FAO's programme entities.

11. The Committee requested some other improvements in reporting on programme implementation in the next version of the PIR to help it better understand what FAO does and to assess effectiveness of delivery and progress in achieving outcomes. In addition to the enhanced reporting on TCP including on its achievements and regional impacts, it expected to see:

- articulation of programme achievements or lack thereof in the context of planned and expected results, including quantitative analysis of outputs produced and the results of auto-evaluations;
- inclusion of the contribution of collaboration with partners, in particular the Rome-based agencies, toward achieving outcomes; and
- clearer presentation of the regional dimensions.

12. The Committee endorsed the PIR 2004-05 for transmission to the Council.

Item 3: Implementation of Conference Decisions and Proposals from the Director-General⁴

13. The Committee appreciated the information provided in the document, and noted in particular that the proposals have built on a continuing process of consultations with Members

⁴ CL 131/18

through various channels, since the discussion of the original proposals last year, as well as on further internal analysis within the Secretariat.

Implementation of Conference Resolution 6/2005

14. The Committee addressed in the first instance the implementation of the decisions of the last session of the Conference, as reflected in Resolution 6/2005.

15. As regards the changes to the structure at headquarters effected on 1 January 2006, the Committee was satisfied that the dispositions in the resolution had been broadly adhered to. It took note of the reasons why the structure of the Technical Cooperation Department (TC) had remained virtually unchanged, i.e. without proceeding with the integration of the country policy assistance function in the Economic and Social Department (ES) and the transfer of the Investment Centre (TCI) to the same ES department. It acknowledged that, besides adjustments made in the context of a headquarters structure comprising eight departments, the nature of the work of both the TCA (dealing with policy assistance) and TCI divisions had been a prevailing factor in keeping them in TC, as they drew on inputs from all technical areas.

16. Concerning the approved first step of the decentralization proposals in Africa and Central Asia, the Committee received updated information on the status of implementation. It was advised that the agreements with four host countries of the subregional offices had been signed, while one (Ethiopia) was expected to be signed very shortly. The Committee appreciated the contributions committed by the concerned host countries towards establishment costs and recurring expenditure as described in the document and noted that the countries would also benefit from the closer proximity of FAO.

17. The Committee was also informed that good progress was being made in the selection of the subregional coordinators and members of the multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) of these offices. It welcomed the confirmation that these offices are to become operational before the end of the present year. It was suggested that consideration of decentralization measures covered in the document would be facilitated if, beyond the data given in Table 3 on the country coverage for the five approved subregional offices, more complete information were to be provided for all regions, including data such as the population to be served, the extent of rural poverty and the prevailing pattern of agriculture.

Shared Services Centre (SSC)

18. While acknowledging the prime interest of the Finance Committee in this matter, the Committee considered the proposal outlined in response to the Conference decision to authorize the establishment of the SSC.

19. The Committee noted that the substantial saving of US\$ 8 million per biennium anticipated to be achieved by configuring the services across three "hubs" (Bangkok, Budapest and Santiago de Chile) supervised from a centre in Rome, and reaffirmed the necessity of achieving cost savings in administrative and financial transaction processing functions. It was satisfied that the proposals met the spirit of the decision by the FAO Conference in connection with the SSC when proposed as a concept.

20. The Committee recognized that there are political dimensions inherent in such arrangements and differing opinions concerning the Director-General's proposal to establish a hub in Budapest. Some Members requested that a hub be established in Africa. The Committee was advised that, besides relative cost differentials, the choice of this city had also taken into account other factors such as the availability of effective local communications and information technology infrastructure, proximity to headquarters, as well as the very favourable conditions offered by the host country in meeting the establishment and running costs of the hub together with eventual relocation expenditures for staff.

21. The Committee agreed that a reaction of the Council on the proposed SSC configuration would be facilitated by the Secretariat preparing a paper describing fully the factors leading to the selection of Budapest *vis à vis* other locations, especially in Africa.

22. The Committee emphasised that the potential for joint action to achieve economies in the administrative sphere by the three Rome-based UN system organizations and Programmes should be explored more actively, recognizing that the results of such efforts would largely materialise over the longer term and stressing the need for the respective governing bodies to advocate joint action in a consistent manner.

Measures under authority of the Director-General

23. The Committee noted the measures taken under the authority of the Director-General, as listed in Section IV of the document. It recalled the strong interest expressed by the membership on seeing greater delegations of authority within the Organization, which had also been underlined by the independent evaluation of decentralization. In this regard, the Committee noted the attention placed particularly on strengthening the work of country offices, including through their enhanced use of the TCP facility.

New operating model for decentralized offices

24. The Committee addressed at some length the implications of the new operating model for decentralized offices as set forth in Annex III. It recalled that the Conference decision regarding strengthened decentralization embodied a major priority for the governing bodies. Some Members stressed that the degree to which this could be carried out, and the effectiveness of related arrangements, were necessarily dependent on the availability of adequate resources. Members recalled their expectation that decentralization would not adversely affect technical capacity at headquarters to implement the approved activities of the Organization.

25. The Committee observed that the new operating model aimed at improving the delivery of programmes and services across geographical locations, implied a somewhat complex pattern of relationships and reporting lines among the various organizational layers. It observed that the successful implementation of matrix management and the operation of multi-disciplinary teams in other institutions – either of national or international nature – depended on supportive human resource arrangements including appropriate performance management and incentives, and noted the intention to develop these. The Committee recognized that the practical application of the model in FAO would be an iterative process and urged for due flexibility so as to learn from experience.

26. Therefore, the Committee recommended that the operating model, including the original concept of subregional office, be adjusted over time and in the light of circumstances specific to each region or subregion, taking advantage of regular feedback. It observed that the indicated percentages of expected contributions (e.g. from the FAORs to the work of the MDTs in respective subregions, and of MDT staff to the delivery of planned PWB programme entities) should not be interpreted too rigidly and had to be understood as averages.

27. During the discussion, concerns were expressed about the capacity of FAORs to contribute to the respective MDT, particularly those located in large countries and likely to face pressing and complex demands within their country of accreditation. The higher demands on FAORs that might be expected to stem from the expanded role and closer integration of UN Country Teams as part of UN system reforms, were also mentioned. Similar concerns were expressed about the capacity of the MDTs, which were proposed for establishment within the existing offices of Bangkok, Cairo and Santiago de Chile, to address the needs of geographical areas which encompassed very substantial populations.

28. The Committee received clarifications on the measures taken to strengthen the capacities of country offices and on the role of the National Professional Officers (NPOs) placed there. More generally, it took note of the flexibility of MDTs to meet demands in respective areas through the relatively high allocations for non-staff human resources built in the budgetary provisions.

29. The Committee was reassured that the staff mix of MDTs was not intended to be cast in stone and that adjustments would continue to be made to deal with well identified gaps. Members of the Latin American and Caribbean region pointed out in this connection the need to strengthen nutrition-related expertise among the staff assigned to the region.

30. The Committee recalled the importance of analytical and planning exercises carried out in developing countries, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategies, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and Common Country Assessments (CCAs) which had to be nationally led, and enquired about the status of FAO's own initiative of developing national medium-term priority frameworks (NMTPFs). The Committee noted that, based on a pilot phase in selected countries, an NMTPF would be expanded to other countries and contribute to national planning exercises through UNDAF.

Further proposals from the Director-General

31. The Committee addressed the further proposals from the Director-General affecting both the headquarters structure and decentralized offices.

32. The Committee recognized that divergences of positions existed on the proposals for further headquarters restructuring. It recognized that, while Members may acknowledge the merits of pursuing strengthened decentralization and the principles guiding change endorsed by the Conference, differing views existed on the sequencing of decision-making, in particular in the context of the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE) and the possible impact of broader UN system reforms.

33. Some Members supported implementation of the further proposals from the Director-General, following endorsement by Council. They agreed with the argumentation provided with regard to the proposed new structure at headquarters within the limit of eight departments set by the Conference. In respect of the proposed subregional offices for Central America and for the Gulf countries, they stressed that these were consistent with expectations in respective regions and the requests made in the Regional Conferences, and they noted the assurance given by the Secretariat that they could be operational relatively rapidly, should they be approved by the Council. These Members recalled that the Conference had stressed the mutual support between the reform process and the IEE, and therefore felt that the further proposals had to be judged on their own merits, not necessarily waiting for the outcome of the IEE, the implementation of which may extend over a long period.

34. Other Members emphasized the desirability of learning from the experience gained with the implementation of the reforms already approved by the Conference, particularly regarding decentralized offices. They considered that it would be premature to embark on further changes without the benefit of such experience. These Members drew attention to the transaction costs inherent in change processes, and the negative impact that potential future reversal of organizational measures could have on staff morale and the orderly implementation of programmes. They also recalled that the inception report of the IEE had highlighted potential risks if changes undertaken in the Organization were to be at variance with the eventual recommendations from the IEE, as well as the opportunity cost of not proceeding if changes conformed with the recommendations. They stressed that knowledge by the membership of the scope of preliminary and subsequently final recommendations, as well as the decisions thereof by the Conference, was now a matter of months.

35. Members from Asia sought details including on the potential opening of subregional offices in Asia, positioning of an MDT and the consequent reduction in international professional staff at the Bangkok regional office and emphasised the need for the Director-General to engage them in further consultation.

36. In any event, the Committee appreciated the clarifications provided in connection with the set of proposals regarding headquarters. Bearing in mind the above differing views on timing, there was general agreement that elements in the proposed structure appeared reasonable. In

particular, there was broad endorsement of the concept of a Crisis Management Centre (CMC) with a very light permanent structure to coordinate FAO's responses to emergencies linked to transboundary pests and diseases of animal and plants and food safety problems.

37. The Committee took note of the reasons why the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was placed in the proposed department of Natural Resources Management and Environment, while the location of the Secretariat of the IT-PGRFA and other similar treaties would be determined later.

38. The need for vigorous action to catalyze and facilitate the widespread knowledge dissemination and capacity-building activities of the Organization was also supported, although opinions varied on whether relatively large structures should be required for this purpose.

Item 4: Evaluation of TeleFood⁵

39. The Committee appreciated the report of the evaluation of TeleFood which had raised substantive issues for the programme as regards advocacy, fund raising and TeleFood projects. Clarifications were received from the Secretariat on a number of the questions raised, including the proposals to combine TeleFood, the FAO Ambassadors Programme and World Food Day within the Information Division (GII). The Secretariat also provided information on measures taken to re-orient TeleFood projects and on the streamlined processes in place. It emphasised that by the normal benchmark standards TeleFood fund raising provided a good return to FAO's input.

40. The Committee considered the consolidation of all public advocacy in GII in line with the evaluation's recommendations and which was also responded to in the issues raised in the previous evaluation of Communicating FAO's messages. It also noted the steps taken by management to strengthen the effectiveness of TeleFood and management's acceptance of many of the recommendations of the evaluation.

41. It considered, however, that TeleFood could become a lost opportunity and concluded that its future required conceptual thinking outside-the-box. It requested management to carry out this fundamental re-appraisal, drawing on the evaluation, its own experience of TeleFood to date, and the experience of others with similar programmes. It was important to consider the aims and modalities for FAO advocacy at country level and fund raising, both in developed and developing countries, and also the purposes to which funds raised from the public were spent for the benefit of the food insecure. In such rethinking, the three inter-linked aims of TeleFood should be fully considered and this could lead to a need to reconsider Conference Resolution 3/97 – Annex VI.

42. The Committee, therefore, requested management to provide an expanded management response for its next meeting which would address in-depth both the issues and recommendations of the evaluation and take into account major considerations identified during the Committee's discussion, including:

- a) clarity on the purposes and focus of advocacy, both for FAO itself and advocacy on the issues;
- b) questions as to whether FAO should be pursuing very small TeleFood projects, or should either work partly or wholly through other organizations, including national NGOs as suggested by some Members of the Committee, or raise funds on the basis of the problems to be addressed rather than specific project types or programmes as suggested by some other Members (grant components to support micro-credit and capacity building for NGO programmes directly assisting the rural poor were mentioned as possibilities, as well as action within FAO's own projects and emergency rehabilitation programmes);

⁵ PC 96/4 A); PC 96/4 A) SUP. 1

- c) the importance of partnerships for public advocacy with the other Rome-based food agencies; the question of branding and whether it is appropriate to pursue the TeleFood, FAO and UN brand;
- d) the need for advocacy to have something to show and clearly address the needs of the food insecure, but it was not clear whether or not this was best done by demonstrating small projects to the public;
- e) the value of continuity and follow-up in national campaigns as distinct from one-off events;
- f) decentralization of decision-making on both TeleFood projects and TeleFood campaigns in developing countries to the FAORs, thus linking national initiatives to national programmes; and
- g) in addition to examining ways to further cut the overhead costs on TeleFood support through projects, re-consideration of the principle that all TeleFood funds are spent for direct assistance without provision for overhead costs, monitoring and technical support. The exact extent of the support cost needed to be clarified.

Item 4: Evaluation of Strategic Objective D2 – *Conservation, Rehabilitation and Development of Environments at Greatest Risk*⁶

43. The Committee appreciated this second evaluation of a strategic objective within the FAO Strategic Framework. It acknowledged that this topic presented methodological difficulties for evaluation. The report provided a frank assessment of the work covered in this area over the past five years, but considered that some of the critical findings in the report could have been better substantiated. The work being done by other UN system organizations should have been more prominently featured, to strengthen consideration of FAO's comparative advantage. Note was taken of the view expressed by FAO 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.

44. The Committee agreed with the External Peer Review Panel and senior management that a framework should be established for FAO and its partners to define priorities, establish goals and specify indicators in D2-related areas; that greater emphasis should be put on innovative work like economic valuation and ecosystem goods and services; and that longer duration projects should be sought in D2-related areas.

45. It also agreed with the FAO management and peer reviewers with respect to the first recommendation, stating 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 the role that the present evaluation had played in this respect. Such a strategy should embrace an ecosystem approach to development and, in order to do this, the strategy should clearly give priority to FAO's role in promoting policy dialogue at country level, bringing together the diverse government departments concerned. Another essential feature of the strategy would be capacity-building to support both national policy development and implementation. In this regard, the development of a unifying programme entity in the new programme structure to underpin the development and implementation of the strategy was a most helpful development.

46. The Committee looked forward to receiving a follow-up report in two years as was normal practice, including full information on the development of a coordinated strategy.

⁶ PC 96/4 B); PC 96/4 B) SUP. 1

Item 4: Multilateral Evaluation of the 2003-05 Desert Locust Campaign - Towards a More Effective Response to Desert Locusts and their Impacts on Food Security, Livelihoods and Poverty⁷

47. The Committee welcomed the evaluation of the 2003-05 Desert Locust Campaign. This evaluation had been funded and conducted fully independently with its own steering committee representing donors, affected countries and FAO. It had addressed the role of all parties, FAO, affected countries and donors and the work had been conducted in a participatory and transparent manner throughout. The evaluation report was analytical and comprehensive, covering new ground in its examination of locust issues from the socio-economic, health and environmental perspectives.

48. The Programme Committee noted that specialist advice to the Council on this topic was provided by the FAO Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC), which had discussed the report in-depth. It welcomed the establishment by the DLCC of a working group to review the recommendations of the evaluation and noted that the DLCC had also requested that the Steering Committee of the Multilateral Evaluation monitor the progress of the implementation of the recommendations.

49. The Committee considered that FAO should continue to play the lead coordinating role for locust early warning, coordination and, when necessary, control. Within the FAO Regular Programme, greater relative priority should therefore be accorded to Desert Locust work as this was a core function. FAO needed to establish capacity in depth including for early warning and a critical mass of staff need to be maintained.

50. The Committee welcomed the information provided by FAO management on the steps being taken in follow-up to the evaluation, but was disappointed by the lack of depth and precision of the management response. It considered that this should have presented an action agenda for how FAO intended to address the issues and recommendations referring to FAO in the report and also how it intended to support member countries and regional arrangements for those recommendations addressed to them.

51. The Committee noted that the implementation of many of the recommendations required long-term planning and capacity-building. This should be brought to the attention of the Council and FAO should follow the recommendations closely. The Committee also recognised the importance of member countries considering how locust preparedness and locust response capacity could be maintained, while public awareness declined in periods of locust recession. The Committee requested an elaborated management response for its next session which would take into account the progress made by the DLCC working group and the support which FAO would provide to that group and to the steering committee. It should also address concerns raised by the Committee on:

- integration of livelihood protection and rehabilitation needs into locust campaign responses;
- FAO operational efficiency;
- the attention to be given to capacity-building and how capacity can be maintained;
- the need and possibilities to develop agreements covering such issues as donor provision of funds; rapid provision of pesticide and aircraft; joint work between neighbouring countries; the establishment of regional response capacity, and the development of an international treaty on locust control; and
- improvements in the appeal process for locust and similar emergencies, maximising on the potentials of the UN common appeal mechanism.

⁷ PC 96/4 c); PC 96/4 c) SUP. 1

Item 5: UN Joint Inspection Unit Reports

*JIU/REP/2005/8: Further Measures to Strengthen United Nations System Support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)*⁸

*JIU/REP/2006/2: Oversight Lacunae in the United Nations System*⁹

52. The Committees took note with interest, of these two UN Joint Inspection Unit Reports and the Director-General's comments thereon.

Item 6: Any Other Business

53. The Committee considered a number of aspects related to evaluation under Any Other Business and decided that:

- a) in future sessions it would have a standing item covering evaluation on its agenda. This would enable it to discuss both evaluation reports and other matters relating to evaluation as necessary; and
- b) the procedure followed for the evaluations presented at this session of the Committee of giving the evaluation team's reactions to the management response of FAO should be continued as standard practice.

54. The Committee also considered evaluations to be presented at its next session in May 2007. In line with the procedure agreed at its previous meeting the Committee decided that it would consider the evaluation of FAO's work in commodities and trade in extended summary, noting that the full report would be provided in the original language on the evaluation Web site. It also wished to receive a synthesis report on the Tsunami evaluation. The timetable of further reports put before the Committee would be considered when it examined the rolling work-plan of evaluations 2008-11, also at its May 2007 session.

55. The Committee took note of information it was given on the programmatic approach the Organization was now introducing for evaluation of emergency rehabilitation in partnership with donors and the affected countries. It welcomed this development and emphasised the need for the further discussion the Evaluation Service would be convening on the modalities, with donors on the one hand, and representatives of affected countries on the other.

⁸ CL 131/INF/9

⁹ CL 131/INF/13