



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
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Hundred and Seventy-third Session

Rome, 12 - 16 November 2018

Geographical Balance of Consultants

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

Mr Fernando Serván
Director
Office of Human Resources
Tel. +3906 5705 2299

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;
an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.
Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org*



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This document presents a progress report on the Organization's efforts to build a workforce that reflects the geographic diversity of its Members while retaining merit as the primordial criterion for recruitment.
- This document presents the measures adopted by Organization since December 2017, the results that have emerged since the introduction of these measures, and further actions planned to achieve a geographic balance of consultants.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- The Committee is invited to take note of the progress report presented in this document.

Introduction

1. At its 158th session in December 2018, the FAO Council “encouraged Management to take into account the need for geographical balance of consultants in the recruitment exercise, consistent with geographic distribution for staff members, for more effective delivery of programmes and activities, whilst retaining merit as the primordial criterion for recruitment, and requested the Secretariat to submit a comprehensive document for geographical balance of consultants to the next session of the Finance Committee, taking into account the points raised by the Council at this session”.¹
2. On the basis of information presented by the Secretariat at the Finance Committee in May 2018, at the 159th session of the Council in June 2018, Members “requested the Secretariat to present a progress report to the next session of the Council on the ongoing efforts to improve the geographic distribution of consultants, based on the revised policy of recruitment and evaluation of consultants and took note of the assurance by the Secretariat that the efforts to improve equitable geographical distribution will take into account the need for a flexible approach in the selection process, including cost implications, retaining merit as the primary criterion for recruitment, and will not apply rigid numerical ranges.”²
3. This document presents a progress report on the measures adopted by Organization since December 2017, the results that have emerged since the introduction of these measures, and further actions planned to achieve a geographic balance of consultants.
4. In this respect, it should be noted that the Organization has been concentrating efforts in attracting more qualified candidates and enriching the pool of potential consultants in the relevant rosters, which have resulted in improvements in their geographic balance. This has been possible thanks to the competitive process introduced for consultancies in August 2017 and to the increased advertisement of consultancies opportunities, using social media and technical networks as well as FAO offices worldwide.
5. The enforcement of standardized selection processes - which foresee the issuance of vacancy announcements for all consultancies, the establishment of interview panels including one member external to the hiring unit and endorsement by the relevant Assistant Director-General – ensures that merit is maintained as the primary criterion for recruitment.
6. Once candidates are endorsed for incorporation into the rosters, they can be hired directly by units without additional interviews. To ensure that corporate efforts to improve the geographic balance of consultants are taking into consideration in the recruitment process, a flexible approach has been adopted for consultancies funded by the regular programme. Departments, based on their current geographic balance and consultants receive approval on a case-by-case basis.
7. In addition, the issuance of periodic reports on departmental rosters of consultants and hired consultants have allowed for a better monitoring of the geographic distribution by hiring units themselves, with support of the Office of Human Resources (OHR).
8. The actions implemented are already producing tangible results, with the creation of large and geographically-balanced rosters of consultants, which are readily available for hiring by the Organization. However, more remains to be done to effectively achieve a more diverse workforce with a better geographic balance of consultants.

¹ CL 158/REP, para 12 k)

² CL 159/REP, para 13 h)

I. Measures Introduced since December 2017

A. Issuance of Vacancy Announcements for all consultancies

9. The Organization maintains merit as the primordial criterion in its selection and hiring processes. As mentioned above, a mandatory competitive selection process for consultants was introduced in August 2017, in line with the recommendations outlined in the Review of Individual Consultancies in the United Nations System report by the Joint Inspection Unit³.

10. The Organization transformed its selection procedures, from being non-competitive and non-transparent to being structured, global and competitive. FAO is currently one of the few UN agency that issues vacancy announcements for all consultancy assignments, thereby providing external candidates with an opportunity to compete for jobs in the Organization. Thanks to these open and global vacancy announcements and renewed outreach efforts, the Organization receives many more applications from qualified individuals which contributes to the creation of larger rosters of qualified candidates.

11. This approach is in line with the findings reported in the JIU report that specifies that "recruitment of the best qualified candidate can be accomplished through good planning, targeting many candidates and effective competition. Wider dissemination of consultancy opportunities would contribute to netting more qualified candidates for recruitment. To this end, dynamic roster databases could provide more candidates for a faster selection process and also facilitate the competition. They would facilitate speedy recruitment of consultants who already have good track records, and require more rigorous competition for newcomers."⁴

12. It should be noted that since 2017 the recruitment of Consultants requires a double approval. A first approval by the immediate supervisor of the consultant is followed by approval from the budget holder of the concerned organizational unit. In the event that the immediate supervisor is the budget holder, then higher order approval is required from the supervisor of the budget holder. This dual process is also applied to the performance evaluation of Consultants at the end of their assignment using Quality Assessment Reports. These measures reinforce merit-based criteria in the recruitment process.

B. Creation of rosters of consultants

13. Rosters are an important element for improving geographic diversity, as it provides managers with a potentially large pool of qualified candidates for appointments. This could be achieved through various methods, including planning consultancy needs well in advance so as to expand the consultancy pool and exploring ways to attract candidates from all countries.

14. The starting point to improve geographical balance among consultants lies with the geographical balance of candidates in the rosters. At roster level, improvements in the last period have been satisfactory, showing a constant and substantial increase of countries represented, as indicated in *Table 1*. From October 2017 to October 2018, the number of countries represented in the rosters increased from 54 to 153.

³ JIU/REP/2012/5. <http://undocs.org/JIU/REP/2012/5>

⁴ JIU/REP/2012/5, par.123, pg.27, <http://undocs.org/JIU/REP/2012/5>

Table 1. Evolution of rosters of consultants

	October 2017	December 2017	October 2018
Number of rosters	65	79	90
Candidates included in the rosters	102	425	2774
Countries represented in the rosters	54	93	153
% of female candidates in the rosters	47%	52%	52%

C. Better monitoring

15. Starting January 2018, hiring units (departments/regional offices/SP teams) were encouraged to improve the outreach of the vacancy announcements for consultants to obtain candidates from a large geographic base. At the same time, OHR started collaborating with decentralized offices to take measures to improve the dissemination of the vacancies at country level.

16. In parallel, trends at departmental and corporate level regarding geographic balance of rosters by units started being monitored by OHR, and units were informed on a regular basis of the situation, in order to inter alia achieve improved geographical balance in rosters and selection reports.

17. This monitoring process has been key to ensure a wider dissemination of vacancy announcements, more opportunities for nationals of member nations to be interviewed and as a consequence richer and geographically balanced rosters. At the same time, hiring units receive information on the status of their geographic balance of consultants and are encouraged to make additional efforts to improve it as appropriate.

D. Flexibility in the hiring of consultants

18. Further to the guidance of the Council, in July 2018, the policy for the selection and recruitment of consultants was reinforced through the issuance of Administrative Circular 2018/04, supported by a revised Note for Selection of Consultants under MS317 and Subscribers to Personal Services Agreements under MS 319. The documents clarify responsibilities for the rigorous observation of corporate efforts and procedures designed to enhance geographical balance of consultants and introduced additional controls in the recruitment process

19. The Organization applied a case by case approach in line with the flexibility needed in this exercise. In particular, in departments where one or two nationalities represented more than 50% of the share of consultants, hiring managers were encouraged to identify other qualified candidates in the rosters to correct any imbalance. A transitional period of three months was granted to avoid work disruption as well as to provide hiring managers with sufficient time to identify candidates from the rosters to improve the geographic balance of their consultants.

II. Emerging Results

20. As mentioned earlier, the actions implemented are already producing tangible results regarding the geographic diversity of the rosters.

21. As can be seen in the *Table 2*, the number of countries represented in each departmental roster increased during the period May to October 2018, thanks to the efforts and commitment of hiring units which are preparing the basis for a geographic balance of hired consultants.

Table 2. Number of endorsed candidates for each Organizational Rosters and related geographic balance (May 2018 – October 2018)

	Number of candidates in the roster May 2018	Number of countries represented in the roster May 2018	Number of candidates in the roster October 2018	Number of countries represented in the roster October 2018
APEX	178	58	268	70
DDO	82	35	213	57
DDP	379	86	705	105
ES	230	62	602	92
AG	157	54	342	83
CB	16	37	284	56
FI	82	33	207	47
FO	109	38	216	49
RAF	84	34	177	52
RAP	92	46	202	68
REU	51	37	157	56
RLC	20	14	68	28
RNE	44	29	89	40
Total	1 479*	136	2 774*	153

* Candidates included in more than one roster are counted only once in the total

22. It should be noted that the increased number of potential consultants, from such a high number of nationalities, will result in greater possibilities for decentralized offices to hire expertise locally available, or experts with knowledge of the region and/or countries.

23. In addition, the percentage of female candidates endorsed in the rosters increased from 47% in October 2017 to 52% in October 2018. At the same time, the percentage of female candidates actually hired by the Organization increased from 42% in January 2017 to 49% in October 2018.

24. Regarding the current geographic balance of consultants, *Table 3* presents the changes in distribution between the last report in May 2018 and this report.

25. As it can be noted, the accumulated share of consultants funded by the regular programme for the top 5 or 10 nationalities decreased slightly (2%), as a result of the measures introduced. However, for consultants funded by extrabudgetary resources there has been an specular increase for the same groupings (top 5 and top 10 countries) with the result that the overall geographic balance (all funding sources) remains similar between May and October 2018.

Table 3. Share of the top nationalities of origin of consultants (COF/REG)

	2018 May	2018 October
Regular Programme		
Total number of consultants (RP)	721	617
Countries represented	109	106
Share of top 5 nationalities (%)	46.7%	43.6%
Share of top 10 nationalities (%)	58.3%	56.7%
Trust Funds		
Total number of consultants (TF)	645	739
Countries represented	105	110
Share of top 5 nationalities (%)	42.3%	44.3%
Share of top 10 nationalities (%)	55.8%	58%
All Funding		
Total number of consultants (all funding)	1 366	1 356
Countries represented	135	133
Share of top 5 nationalities (%)	44.14%	43.95%
Share of top 10 nationalities (%)	56.22%	56.19%

III. Further Actions

26. The Organization will continue in its efforts to improve the geographic balance of consultants funded by the regular programme, giving priority to monitoring and outreach efforts. Regular reports will continue to be sent to departments, to allow them to verify trends and apply adjustments on a timely basis. In addition to the data about rosters, the departments receive information on the status of their current geographic balance of consultants. The Organization will continue to monitor the situation centrally, to evaluate further measures when and where needed.

27. Outreach activities are essential to continue attracting the best candidates available and to implement targeted campaigns in the countries which are less represented in the rosters. The main goal of the revised policy was to introduce an open and merit-based selection process, providing opportunities to all qualified candidates; therefore, the outreach activities are one of the most important elements to further improve the new process. In the last year, the Organization focused on corporate outreach activities and will now start working on more specific campaigns, in liaison with hiring units, decentralized FAO offices and the member countries.

28. The measures introduced by the Organization have already resulted in improved geographic balance of rosters at unit level and at corporate level, thus achieving the objective of having a geographically diversified workforce of consultants. The same applies to hired consultants with a decrease in the concentration of consultants in few countries, as presented in *Table 3*.

29. A better geographic balance of consultants will be finally achieved only once the corporate culture will assimilate the concept and will recognize the benefits coming from a more diverse workforce. The Organization will continue to encourage hiring units to diversify geographically their workforce while at the same time will implement specific communication activities to reinforce this view to staff including the evaluation of e-learning as a potential tool in support of inclusive, diverse work environment.