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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

## Thirty-second Session

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### Synthesis of FAO Evaluations 2014-2019 in Europe and Central Asia Region

#### Executive Summary

At its 125th session, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Programme Committee requested the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) to submit regional syntheses of lessons learned from, and trends identified in the country programme evaluations to the regional conferences to be held in 2020.

The synthesis for Europe and Central Asia region (ECA-region) responds to this request by focusing on two broad themes, namely (i) rural poverty reduction and (ii) agri-food trade and market integration. Other important themes very much related with normative values such as natural resources and changing climate, food security and nutrition, gender equality and capacity development were also addressed, and the analysis was embedded into the two main focus themes.

The objective was (i) to identify lessons and trends from evaluations that can inform the debate on FAO's contribution to results in the ECA-region and countries, as well as (ii) to provide reflections and suggestions for future work planning at the regional level. It was not an evaluation of regional programmes, priorities or the FAO Regional Initiatives (RIs). It was instead a synthesis of results, trends and lessons learned from evaluations conducted by OED in the region between 2014 and 2019, including Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs), Thematic/Strategic Evaluations and Project/Programme Evaluations.

The FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) is the Organization's highest Governing Body for the ECA-region and aims at ensuring the effectiveness of FAO's work in the service of member countries and defines priority areas of work for the following biennium. FAO's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) provides and coordinates FAO policy and technical assistance in the region. The field programme is active in 17 countries in the region and FAO has official presence in ten of them.

Since 2014, REU has been enhancing an integrated programming approach through the Strategic Objectives (SOs), RIs and Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) for formulation and implementation of its assistance to the programme countries. The three RIs aim to: empower

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smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction (RI1); improve agri-food trade and market integration (RI2); and manage natural resources sustainably, under a changing climate (RI3).

In this framework, the RIs have become the main programmatic instrument to align the Organization's work to the most crucial priorities in the region by delivery of relevant products and services at regional and country level, contributing to the achievement of agreed outputs and outcomes.

#### **Suggested action by the Regional Conference**

The Regional Conference is invited to endorse the follow recommendations:

- Improve the existing accountability framework at regional and thematic level making it fully comprehensive and consistent ensuring that all projects are based on a robust theory of change.
- Implement a consistent and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system both at national and regional level. Strengthen the regional and subregional offices' capacities to provide backstopping support to FAO country offices in project formulation and resource prospecting.
- Ensure that all projects include a robust exit strategy shifting the attention to strengthening institutions as well as facilitating cross-learning, spreading the knowledge across the region and capitalize on FAO's technical expertise to engage with strategic partners.
- Continue to develop knowledge and capacity (both within FAO and among stakeholders) on gender mainstreaming to ensure that gender issues are addressed by (all) FAO's work in the region (e.g. systematic gender analysis conducted throughout the programme and project cycle).

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## I. Introduction

### I.1 Background

1. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) conducts evaluations to provide accountability of the Organization to Members, giving them an assessment of the work to achieve the Strategic Objectives (SOs) the Organization sets for itself as well as its organizational performance.<sup>1</sup>

2. Importantly, evaluations provide an objective basis for programme and strategy setting by senior management and eventually for decisions of FAO's Governing Bodies. As set out in the Charter of OED,<sup>2</sup> evaluations also contribute to corporate learning, and provide an objective basis for decisions on improvements to the Organization's programmes and projects. The Programme Committee of FAO, at its 125th session, invited OED to submit regional syntheses of lessons learned from, and trends identified in the country programme evaluations to the FAO regional conferences to be held in 2020.

3. This document presents the results of the Synthesis for ECA-region as foreseen in the terms of reference. Based on the results of a rapid review, the synthesis of ECA-region evaluations focused on two broad themes, namely (i) rural poverty reduction and (ii) agri-food trade and market integration. Other important themes very much related with normative values<sup>3</sup> such as natural resources and changing climate, food security and nutrition, gender equality and capacity development were also addressed, and the analysis was embedded into the two main focus themes.

#### Box 1: Evaluation themes

- i. Rural poverty reduction.
- ii. Agri-food trade and market integration.

### I.2 Purpose, objectives and scope

4. The purpose of this regional synthesis was to inform the ERC about results, issues and lessons learned from OED evaluations completed between 2014 and 2019. By providing coherent, documented evidence, it expected to contribute to informed decisions on priorities and actions. The secondary purpose was to enhance the utilization of OED evaluation reports at the regional level and create demand

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<sup>1</sup> The FAO's Strategic Framework includes a vision with five SOs as the main areas of work on which FAO should focus its efforts in support of Members:

1. contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition;
2. increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner;
3. reduce rural poverty;
4. enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems at local, national and international levels; and
5. increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.

<sup>2</sup> Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation (2010) Charter of OED. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/k7774e/k7774e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The normative values of the UN can be briefly summarized as the principles of right to food, gender equality, environmental sustainability, capacity development and results-based management. United Nations Development Group; 2010; Guidance Note, Application of the Programming Principles.

for regionally-focused evaluations. The results of the synthesis will be presented at the ERC to be held in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), from 5 to 7 May 2020.

5. Although the ERC is the primary audience for the synthesis report, others too can benefit from it. Table 1 shows the primary and secondary audiences and the potential uses.

**Table 1: Main users of the synthesis**

Audience	Potential use
FAO Regional Conference for Europe	Use information on results and trends on FAO interventions in the region to inform discussions on regional priorities and FAO interventions.
FAO Programme Committee	Use information on results and trends on FAO interventions in the region to inform discussions on regional priorities and FAO interventions.
FAO Regional and Subregional Office	Use lessons to inform and improve support to FAO country offices. Learn lessons from other FAO regions.
FAO Country Offices	Learning lessons from other countries in the region.

6. The synthesis covered a sample of evaluations that OED managed and completed between 2014 and 2019, including country programme evaluations (CPEs), thematic/strategic evaluations and project/programme evaluations. This synthesis did not cover issues of finance and administration.

7. It is important to note that this was not an evaluation of regional programmes, priorities or the RIs. It was instead a synthesis of results, trends and lessons learned from evaluations conducted by OED in ECA-region.

8. The objective was (i) to identify lessons and trends from evaluations that can inform the debate on FAO's contribution to results in the ECA-region and countries as well as (ii) to provide reflections and suggestions for future work planning at the regional level. The preparation of the regional synthesis was part of a broader objective of enhancing the usefulness and utilization of evaluations by Members of the Governing Bodies, in particular, at the regional level. The synthesis was guided by the questions in Box 2.

**Box 2: Evaluation questions**

- i. **Results through FAO support to the region.** What are the main results, in the regional priorities/thematic areas, that have been achieved through FAO support to the region and countries in the region?
- ii. **Emerging issues and gaps.** What issues and gaps emerge from the evaluations, which require attention/consideration by the FAO Regional Conference for Europe?
- iii. **Lessons to be learned.** What lessons can be learned from evaluations that can inform FAO's future programming/actions in the region?

### I.3 Methodology

9. The synthesis was not based on the conventional evaluation criteria established by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), but used a common framework used by all regional syntheses. It was conducted as a document review and therefore relied on secondary data. As suggested by the terms of reference, the process to select the regional themes and relevant evaluation reports (data sources) involved:

- i. identifying the key priorities and themes in the region;
- ii. review of evaluations and mapping their contribution to the identified themes;
- iii. selecting the themes for which there were at least three or four evaluations that could be used as data sources for the synthesis.

10. Two themes were selected that broadly correspond to the two older RIs (rural poverty reduction and agri-food trade and market integration). Other important themes such as natural resources and changing climate (third RI), food security and nutrition (overarching theme), gender equality and capacity development (normative values) were also addressed and the analysis was embedded into the two main focus themes.

11. Only eight evaluations offered relevant evidence for these themes in ECA-region (i.e. two of country programmes,<sup>4</sup> three of specific projects,<sup>5</sup> two thematic<sup>6</sup> and one of a global project).<sup>7</sup> Their relevance was determined by their potential contribution to present findings, lessons and conclusions; support the RIs, themes and priorities as stated in official documents, as well as support the FAO's and global strategic directions, namely the SOs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

12. The synthesis faced a number of challenges that resulted in some important limitations that should be borne in mind when discussing its conclusions. A limited number of themes could be considered, and triangulation was not feasible due to the limited timeframe. It was very difficult to make generalizations at the regional level due to the very limited number of evaluations available in ECA-region. The available evaluations were not fully representative of the region as they were not balanced (most, besides Georgia, mainly referred to Central Asia countries). The variability of evaluations, including the time lag between completion and period covered, and other aspects (e.g. quality, type, focus, team, etc.) made it very difficult to find comparable evidence at the regional level. As a consequence, there was an important gap between the actual needs and priorities of the region and the availability and retrospectivity of evaluations, e.g. there are very important differences between FAO's infrastructure in the region today and that present during the periods evaluated (see Section 2.4). Therefore, this was not an exhaustive evaluation of the region but a synthesis based on a limited number of evaluations that targeted specific countries in the region.

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<sup>4</sup> Georgia Country Evaluation (2019) and Kyrgyzstan Country Evaluation (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Sustainable Land Management and Climate-Friendly Agriculture (Turkey) (2017), Strengthening of the National Food Security Information System in the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan) (2015), and FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) (2015).

<sup>6</sup> SO3 Evaluation (including case studies in Albania, Georgia and Tajikistan) (2016) and SO4 Evaluation (2017).

<sup>7</sup> Capacity building on Obsolete and POPs Pesticides in EECCA countries (FSP) (2014) (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Mongolia, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Romania).

## I.4 Structure of report

13. Following this introduction, Section 2 presents the regional context and background; Section 3 presents the main findings for each evaluation question, i.e. results through FAO support to the region, emerging issues and gaps and lessons learned; conclusions and recommendations are finally presented in Section 4.

## II. Regional context

14. The ECA-region includes 53 countries and one member organization.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore a heterogeneous region in terms of the countries' economic structure, rate of economic growth and transition, geographic position, climatic conditions, and various socio-demographic features. The context and analysis that follows is only relevant for the countries where REU operates (excluding the European Union and the European Free Trade Association [EFTA] countries).

### II.1 Rural poverty

15. The countries in the region vary greatly in terms of economic standing, value added of agriculture as share of gross domestic product (GDP) and poverty rate (e.g. above 30 percent in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and only around 3 percent in Kazakhstan).

16. Although large commercial farms exist in some countries side-by-side with many economically unprofitable smallholders, ECA-region is largely a region of smallholders as a result of land reforms in the 1990s. According to the World Bank (WB) (2018),<sup>9</sup> some families in the region struggle to afford the costs of heating and food (despite the average household in the region only spending over 7 percent of its income to pay for energy and food). Such households are considered to be extremely poor.

### II.2 Agri-food trade and market integration

17. There are also great variations in ECA-region in terms of quality of physical infrastructure (e.g. roads) and trade support infrastructure. Countries of the region have different types of engagement with several economic unions in support of trade integration with different trade rules and standards (e.g. European Union and Eurasian Economic Union [EEU]).<sup>10</sup>

18. While the contexts and challenges differ greatly across the region, most of the countries are undergoing changes related to agri-food trade, partly connected to requirements linked to the regional trade agreements. Most countries are World Trade Organization (WTO) members, with the majority having joined relatively recently and are hence in need of training and improved trade policy-related

<sup>8</sup> The ECA-region has the following subregions: the Caucasus (3 countries); Central Asia (5); European Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (4); the Western Balkans and Turkey (6); European Union (28); and European Free Trade Association and other (7).

<sup>9</sup> Poverty and shared prosperity, The World Bank (2018) available at:

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/30418/9781464813306.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Economic unions in support of trade integration in ECA-region include:

- European Union: In Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, European Union accession negotiations are ongoing. Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have signed European Union Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the European Union. Turkey has a free trade agreement with the European Union (since 1996) and a customs union since 1995.
- EEU, with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation as members.
- Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not in any of these groups.

analysis skills. This concerns food safety issues (e.g. transboundary diseases) as well as much broader issues, such as lack of market information, lack of predictability in trade policy (with many ad hoc barriers) and lack of knowledge and effective use of international trade rules.

19. Addressing the desire for export diversification also requires a regional approach. It is prompted in particular, but not only, by an increasing trend in the region to limit trade through tariff and food safety policies (in the context of trade wars), as well as many countries speaking of food self-sufficiency as a goal of their agricultural trade policy. A focus on value chain development is another related area of common priorities, along with export promotion. The lack of availability of state finance for state provided services, while differing greatly across the countries in terms of the extent, applies to all countries. Agriculture in many countries of the region is dominated by small farms – a factor which complicates the implementation of reforms and affects the effectiveness of agricultural trade.

### II.3 State of food security and nutrition

20. FAO's *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia* (2019)<sup>11</sup> highlighted new evidence that points to a stagnation of the decreasing trend in food insecurity in recent years in some subregions, particularly in Central Asia, despite food security having improved substantially over the past two decades in the region. About 2.1 percent of the region's population are affected by a severe level of food insecurity.<sup>12</sup> Adult women suffer a higher rate of severe food insecurity than men in several subregions (i.e. the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the European Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS]). While the overall malnutrition situation has improved, overweight among children and obesity among adults continue to rise and now constitute a significant issue.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, stunting and wasting remain prevalent in some places, particularly in rural and remote areas. Malnutrition in one or more of its three main forms – undernutrition, overweight and obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies – is present to varying degrees in all countries of the region, particularly in remote and rural areas.

21. In order to implement the 2030 Agenda, a range of policy measures are being adopted at subregional and national levels to achieve SDG 2. These policy frameworks consider the food system as a whole and aim at addressing all four dimensions of food security – availability, access, utilization and stability – and nutrition. Monitoring the implementation of these policy measures needs to be supported by data on all forms of malnutrition, disaggregated by gender, social groups, and at subnational level. Furthermore, climate change has an undermining effect in all dimensions of food security. Nutrition is highly susceptible to changes in climate and natural resources, like impaired nutrient quality and dietary diversity, impact on water and sanitation, effects on patterns of health risks and disease, etc.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> FAO's *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia* (2019), available at: <http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA7153EN/>

<sup>12</sup> In the three-year period from 2015 to 2017, about 19 million people (14.3 million adults and 4.7 million children) in the region suffered from severe food insecurity, according to the new Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)-based indicator. Although this prevalence is far lower than the world average of 9.2 percent, it is still of concern in some countries.

<sup>13</sup> A recent World Health Organization (WHO) analysis covering the 2000-2016 period showed a continuous increase in the prevalence of obesity among adults in all subregions of the ECA-region. In 2016, one-fourth of adults in Europe (European Union -28 and European CIS), and more than 32 percent of adults in Turkey, were obese.

<sup>14</sup> FAO's *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia* (2018), available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2703EN/CA2703EN.pdf>

## II.4 Regional structures

22. The FAO Conference, the sovereign Governing Body of the Organization, established conferences for each region. The ERC is the Organization's highest Governing Body for the ECA-region and aims at ensuring the effectiveness of FAO's work at the service of Members and defines priority areas of work for the following biennium.<sup>15</sup>

23. It is an official forum where Ministers for Agriculture and other high-level officials from all Members in the region meet every biennium (in years when the FAO Conference is not sitting) to debate challenges related to food and agriculture, thus promoting regional coherence. The ERC reports through the Programme and Finance Committees to the Council on programme and budget matters, and to the Conference on policy and regulatory matters. In addition, there are several discussion fora in ECA-region where Members exchange ideas, discuss current issues and develop recommendations, including six Regional Commissions,<sup>16</sup> three Working Parties<sup>17</sup> and two expert groups.<sup>18</sup>

24. The field programme is active in 17 countries in the region and FAO has official presence in ten of them. REU provides and coordinates FAO policy and technical assistance in the region. REU is the smallest regional office and the analysed evaluations highlighted that REU's overstretched resources were a limiting factor in several areas (e.g. nutrition and value chain development related work). For example, the regional infrastructure was inadequate for implementing the FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme (FTPP).<sup>19</sup> At the time of its inception, FAO had limited or no field presence in the participating countries and relatively small national programmes. This was compounded by the fact that the capacities at headquarters in some of the related departments have decreased (e.g. rural finance). Currently, FAO has a fully established Subregional Office for Central Asia (SEC), as well as adequate infrastructure with representation and offices in most Central Asian

<sup>15</sup> The ERC is the only one which has its rules of procedures approved. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/mj470e/mj470e.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Regional Commissions in ECA-region:

- European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) serviced by REU.
- European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) serviced by REU.
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) serviced by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department.
- European Forestry Commission (EFC) serviced by the Forestry Department.
- European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EUFMD) serviced by the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department.
- Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish), serviced by SEC.

<sup>17</sup> Working Parties in ECA-region:

- Codex Coordinating Committee for Europe serviced by the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department.
- Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds serviced by the Forestry Department.
- UNECE/FAO Forestry & Timber Section.

<sup>18</sup> Expert Groups in ECA-region:

- Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training serviced by the Forestry Department.
- FAO/ECE (UN)/CES Study Group on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Europe serviced by the Economic and Social Development Department.

<sup>19</sup> The FPPP aimed at five major objectives: (i) strengthen FAO's strategic capacities in helping both partners and beneficiaries to improve food security and rural poverty reduction, as set out in the UN Millennium Declaration; (ii) reinforce the involvement of the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock in the upstream policy dialogue in fields of mutual interest; (iii) progress towards broader consensus on the fundamental objectives and strategies of development cooperation in relevant areas, enabling both parties to improve the coherence of their approaches; (iv) facilitate complementarities of actions between both parties; and (v) provide a substantive, financial and operational framework for active cooperation.



countries, except Turkmenistan.<sup>20</sup> For the seven countries with no presence, REU is doing the work of a country office, managing the country programmes remotely with limited staffing and no adequate structure in place.

## II.5 Regional priorities

25. At its 31st session (May 2018), the ERC recognized the importance of the Strategic Framework in providing direction for FAO's technical work to address the regional priorities and ensure effective delivery of results at country and all levels. It identified the following four priorities to guide the work of the Organization in the region:

- i. formulating effective policies for sustainable and inclusive growth for farmers and the rural population;
- ii. enhancing the reach towards new markets through alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies;
- iii. promoting sustainable natural resource management, combating land degradation and desertification; and
- iv. addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition.

26. Since 2014, REU has been enhancing an integrated programming approach through the SOs, RIs and CPFs for formulation and implementation of its assistance to the programme countries. The RIs have become the main programmatic instrument to align the Organization's work to the most crucial priorities in the region by delivery of relevant products and services at regional and country level, contributing to the achievement of agreed outputs and outcomes of the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB). It was recalled that all the 13 valid CPFs in the region<sup>21</sup> (another five are under development) were developed around the RIs.

27. The RIs are the programmatic umbrella to improve the quality of the result chains by facilitating a cross-sectoral approach to the programme of work in the region so as to (i) address the main challenges faced by countries in the region and (ii) monitor FAO's contribution to the SOs and SDGs. The synthesis of SO evaluations (Programme Committee document PC 126/5) highlighted for example that the RIs were designed to incorporate thematic elements from several SOs and were the clearest example of cross-SO work.

28. In this framework, the RIs have adopted a comprehensive approach that fully aligns with the outcomes of the SOs with numerous areas reflected in their conceptual framework (objectives and components):

**Table 2: Regional Initiatives in ECA-region**

	Objectives	Components
<b>RI1</b>	To empower smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support policy development and innovative practices for increased sustainable agricultural production.</li> <li>• Support improvement of rural livelihood and enhanced access to natural resources.</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> Although not yet fully equipped, there is a Partnership and Liaison Office in Kazakhstan.

<sup>21</sup> Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

<b>RI2</b>	To improve agri-food trade and market integration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity development on WTO trade agreements and effective use of WTO procedures.</li> <li>• Implementation of global food quality and safety standards including addressing sanitary, animal health and phytosanitary issues.</li> <li>• Supporting domestic food markets and food export diversification and promotion in view of developing more inclusive and efficient agri-food systems.</li> </ul>
<b>RI3</b>	To manage natural resources sustainably, under a changing climate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved policy alignment, coordination and cooperation for sustainable use of natural resources, climate change and disaster risk reduction.</li> <li>• Effective provision/collection of data, tools and services for effective decision-making on addressing natural resource management, climate change and disaster risk reduction.</li> <li>• Capacity development for sustainable natural resource management and climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction.</li> </ul>

### III. Findings

#### III.1 Results through FAO support to the region

29. Based on the approved priorities stemming from the ERC, the FAO's work was guided and implemented through three main mechanisms: global knowledge products, RIs and CPFs. According to the *Synthesis of findings and lessons learnt from the SO evaluations* (FAO, 2019), contributions have been noted in three areas: support for evidence-based policy formulation, creation of knowledge products and technical guidance and investment in strengthening technical capacities within FAO and in counterpart institutions, supported by normative products.

30. FAO's country-level engagement in the region is reflected in the CPFs developed in consultation with government counterparts and other partners. In general, the evaluations found that the programme portfolio topics were well aligned with FAO's global and regional priorities guided by the RIs. Despite the early stages of implementation, the analysed CPFs and SO evaluations validated contributions to strengthening government capacity in a number of areas, including integrated natural-resource management, food security, nutrition, rural poverty, food systems and resilience.

**Finding 1. Contribution of FAO support to reduce rural poverty in the region: FAO's work in the region responds to the countries' development needs and national objectives. FAO supported the formulation of national policies and strategies and contributed to strengthen institutional and national capacities to better plan and execute value chains. Despite the remaining gaps (see Section 3.2), FAO has also facilitated a much-needed exchange of best practices and contributed to build shared understanding on important tools and concepts within ECA-region (e.g. VGGT, typology of small farms, etc.) The**

**implemented projects have contributed to increase the resilience of small-scale farmers in several countries by for example, enhancing seed production and improving agricultural productivity.**

31. FAO's work to reduce rural poverty in ECA-region is guided by and implemented through the two components of the RII that address a total of 12 areas mainly contributing to SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger) as well as other goals (see Appendix 1).

32. The analysed evaluations confirmed that FAO's work in the region responded to countries' development needs and national objectives related to rural poverty reduction. For example, the CPF in Georgia focuses on the reform and development of the agricultural sector, increased production of high-quality agricultural products, and sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas to address rural poverty. FAO's contribution to develop the national strategy and related policy and institutional frameworks has been instrumental in bringing the Government's attention to this sector as a potential contributor towards economic growth.

33. FAO's work in Georgia has contributed to reduce rural poverty through the support to re-establish rural institutions with focus on the livelihoods of the most vulnerable members of the population. It has also contributed to empower smallholders and develop cooperative concepts and practical models. Similarly, FAO (in partnership with other UN agencies) has implemented several initiatives in Kyrgyzstan to increase rural women's access to services and training them in farm management and revolving fund use.

34. FAO's work supported the formulation of national policies and strategies. For example, the project "Capacity development of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia" (GCP/GEO/004/AUT) contributed to (i) establish the Agricultural Cooperatives Development Agency (ACDA) and its capacity building; (ii) establish agrometeorological systems; (iii) design the farm registry system; (iv) develop Good Agricultural Practices (GAP); (v) prepare a national legal framework for less-favoured areas. The project supported the design of a number of legislative acts: national seed law, ministerial decrees on a farmer registry system, concept note on rural development for the least-favourable areas as well the conditionality of the international agreements between the European Union and the Government of Georgia. In the same way, the policy dialogue facilitated through the FishDev programme resulted in the law on Fisheries in Azerbaijan being improved and approved by the National Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2014.

35. FAO's support to developing new policies or strategic plans had different impacts. According to the FTTP evaluation, most of the draft policies and strategic plans were either not approved, or the approval was still in process.<sup>22</sup> The FTTP evaluation found that the lack of effectiveness was connected to lack of ownership of the documents.

36. The FAO support to the formulation of national policies and strategies was complemented by interventions aimed at strengthening institutional and national capacities to better plan and execute value chains (based on high value addition and export earnings generation capacity) as well as contributing towards demonstration of best practices. For example, the formulation of the Rural Development Strategy and the National Strategy for Agricultural Extension in Georgia was complemented by extensive support to establish the Agricultural Cooperation Development Agency, and related capacity development interventions to promote development of agricultural cooperatives, rural small and medium enterprises and sustainable food value chains. The joint programme with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) made it possible to introduce dairy farmers to new production methods and contributed to involve private sector stakeholders in the process of developing the draft legislation for the wine sector.

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<sup>22</sup> Six out of the 15 selected projects developed either a draft policy or national strategic plan. Of these, one was approved in two countries, one was approved in one country, two were awaiting a response and two had been rejected.

37. FAO has also implemented several projects related to seed development. For example, the project GCP/RER/026/AUS contributed to increase the resilience of small-scale farmers in Kyrgyzstan to the impacts of soaring food prices by improving the capacity and institutional environment for seed production. The project “National Programme for Rehabilitation of Seed Production System in Georgia” (GCP/GEO/003/AUS) supported the Government of Georgia to develop the seed certification system, initially by focusing on development of a seed law and later complemented by the design of a certification scheme, development of the laboratory for seed certification, seed testing and by promoting voluntary certification of seeds and development of national capacities in international seed testing standards and field inspection methods. The system established and associated capacities are viewed by key stakeholders as one of the essential pillars for enhancing seed production and improving agricultural productivity.<sup>23</sup> The regional seed sector development project under the FTTP imparted an overview of the seed sector in terms of technologies, marketing and legislation in the countries. However, the knowledge and skills were created among a small number of people and mainly at the level of government officials and scientists. Many stakeholders also found that mixing participants in the trainings and workshops (e.g. farmers and scientists) resulted in less effective sessions.

38. The evaluations noted that FAO facilitated the exchange of best practices in ECA-region and contributed to building a shared understanding of important tools and concepts, such as the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) and the typology of small farms. Several gaps and emerging issues in these areas have also been identified (see Section 3.2). Under the flagship European Union-funded programme “European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development”, FAO contributed to rural development by developing value chains, training-of-trainers programmes on improving extension services for farmers and providing technical advice to the Information Consultancy Service Centres located in different regions.

39. The projects were in general considered too small and isolated to have a catalytic effect in the region (e.g. FTTP). A few small projects, however, created the knowledge and awareness needed to formulate larger interventions. For example, FAO’s work was instrumental for various partnerships such as the intra-regional partnership of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish) established under GCP/RER/031/TUR. CACFish contributed to strengthen regional collaboration between ministries and research institutions and various recommendations were adopted.

40. FAO’s work primarily targeted public institutions (except for a few non-governmental organizations such as the Seed Association of Tajikistan, Tajik Veterinary Association, Turkey Dairy Association, etc.) and, therefore, the influence at field level was limited. Nevertheless, there were also some examples of efforts to broaden the reach of beneficiaries. For example, the modern technologies and equipment provided to beneficiaries under pilot projects of GAP and rural development were made available for demonstrations to a wider number of farmers. The tourist infrastructure that was part of the rural development component was also available for and used by tourists and tourism agencies. Most of the activities initiated with the support of the project have been continued by the Government of Georgia, indicating some degree of sustainability of these initiatives.<sup>24</sup>

**Finding 2. Contribution of FAO support to strengthen agri-food trade and market integration in the region: FAO has played an important role in supporting several countries in the region with capacity building related to WTO rules and meeting international food quality and safety standards. FAO has**

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<sup>23</sup> The project GCP/GEO/003/AUS met all its three objectives: (i) Introduction of the National Programme Seed and Planting Materials Production; (ii) MOA capacity strengthening in the Programme elaboration and implementation; and (iii) seed producers group capacity strengthening. According to the key informants, there was a 30 percent increase in productivity of wheat and barley production after the first harvest that followed the certification system introduction, which was believed to be mostly attributable to the project.

<sup>24</sup> According to the CPE Georgia, the project’s outputs across all components were delivered with high completion rates in almost all cases, many targets having been exceeded by considerable margins by the time of project completion.

**facilitated the dialogue among countries that offered opportunities to learn from one another and to capitalize on a number of similarities and common ambitions. FAO's role was instrumental in strengthening capacity on sanitary and veterinary control (including assistance during food chain crisis - transboundary issues) as well as to enhance the capacity to implement global food quality standards in the region. Export promotion-related work focused on promotion activities and geographical indication registration but also on value chain analysis and policy advice to some extent.**

41. FAO's work to strengthen agri-food trade and market integration in ECA-region is guided and implemented through the three components of the RI2 that address a total of ten areas. The three components and technical areas encompass activities with trade and markets as the connecting theme that mainly contribute to SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) as well as other goals (see Appendix 1).

42. The analysed evaluations confirmed that FAO has played an important role in supporting the countries with capacity building related to WTO rules and meeting international food quality and safety standards. This has contributed to unlocking the countries' potential by creating a policy environment favourable to domestic and foreign investment in agribusiness and export promotion and diversification. For example, the partnership with EBRD on value chain development has strongly contributed to significant results, working with sectoral associations, promoting public-private dialogues and supporting the development of selected value chains with a comprehensive package of measures (mainly in the European CIS, Western Balkans and Georgia).

43. FAO's work in the region has offered opportunities to the countries to learn from one another and to capitalize on the fact that, despite their differences, countries have a number of similarities and common ambitions, including for example the creation of an Agricultural Trade Policy Expert Network.<sup>25</sup> A number of regional training and knowledge sharing events were organized (both in-person and online) mostly around WTO rules and less on food safety and value chain development. The participants gained a better understanding on WTO principles and rules regulating global agricultural trade, and the accession commitments in agriculture assumed by new WTO member states in the CIS region.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the evaluations confirmed that knowledge products were well received by the Ministries of Agriculture, especially in the context of learning about the practices in other countries.

44. In many countries in the region, the capacities to implement global food quality standards had to be built afresh and FAO provided assistance with food chain crisis/emergencies (including transboundary issues), capacity and institutional development, policy review, updating to align with international requirements. For example, FAO has assisted the countries to develop principles for traceability and risk-based analysis through the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) (support to national animal identification in Kyrgyzstan) and Government Cooperative Programme (GCP) (support to national animal identification in Georgia).<sup>27</sup> The evaluations found evidence of economic benefits with small ruminant farmers doubling their incomes in Serbia and Montenegro.

45. FAO's role was instrumental in strengthening capacity on sanitary and veterinary control issues (e.g. support to the legislation for preparedness for transboundary animal diseases and information system in Republic of Moldova). The Organization played a crucial role in the regional and national

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<sup>25</sup> This is a key output from the RI2. More details on the substantive work in this context is available at: <http://www.fao.org/economic/est/international-trade/europe-and-central-asia/en/#.XiXOmGhKiCo>.

<sup>26</sup> The evaluations confirmed the overall relevance of the WTO training. Despite the level of knowledge and experience differing between countries (and hence the level of relevance), over 50 percent of the participants in 2014 and 2016 admitted that they had not been exposed to the information provided in the courses and considered the information relevant to their job. The effectiveness of the online courses was confirmed by the share of participants that were likely to use the knowledge gained (60-80 percent) and the fact that over 96 percent considerably exceeded the qualification threshold.

<sup>27</sup> Assistance on animal identification and traceability in Georgia was implemented through GCP with financial support of Switzerland and Austria (USD 5.5 million). It aimed at fully transforming the sector not only in Georgia, but also to replicate its results in the South Caucasus region.

control programmes of brucellosis (e.g. five-year surveillance programme in Armenia and Georgia),<sup>28</sup> foot-and-mouth disease (e.g. risk analysis, guidance and regional workshop), African swine fever (e.g. contingency plan, laboratory diagnostic capacity improved, and raised awareness of local veterinary practice, as well as of smallholder pig farmers in Ukraine; six regional simulation exercises were also undertaken)<sup>29</sup> and lumpy skin disease (e.g. workshops, brochures and manuals in 12 countries).

46. The FAO support to enhance capacity in phytosanitary issues came mostly in the form of training. Regional and national workshops on plant protection and pest monitoring were organized, including capacity building workshops to strengthen phytosanitary systems in Armenia, Belarus, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (2016). This training was complemented with subregional workshops (e.g. Balkans, post-Soviet countries and European Union members). The analysed evaluations confirmed the trainings contribution to increased knowledge and awareness in the countries (e.g. evidence on using new methods).

47. Apart from workshops there was also support to conduct assessments (e.g. Armenia and Republic of Moldova) and elaborate National Programmes (e.g. Republic of Moldova). FAO's work in the region contributed to increase the national capacity on food safety standards and best practices through (i) standards setting including four national guides on good hygiene practices in Tajikistan and one in Republic of Moldova; (ii) optimization of laboratory system, introduction of risk-based inspections, improving legislation and training (e.g. Tajikistan); (iii) draft concept of intersectoral food safety coordination mechanism, National Food Safety Response Plan and guide to help convey food safety requirements and good practices to small-scale producers of milk and to food service operators in Republic of Moldova; (iv) technical and scientific advice for Codex committee and Members; and (v) several FAO Investment Centre Division (DPI) projects to strengthen food safety systems across food chain.<sup>30</sup>

48. The conceptualization and operationalization of the typology and modality of work related to export promotion and diversification only started in 2016 and the evaluations noted that it was incomplete or not systematic. In ECA-region, the export promotion-related work focused on (i) promotion activities overseas, trade fairs and exhibitions (e.g. Republic of Moldova introduced in 2016 a compensation scheme for promotional activities overseas such as trade fairs), and (ii) geographical indication registration (e.g. three studies were completed on the experience with implementation of the geographical indication framework, covering Croatia, Hungary and Poland; and a gap analysis of countries in the process of geographical indication framework improvements was conducted, covering Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation). In this framework, the support to the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova resulted on the introduction of measures to compensate producers' costs related to geographical indication registration. In Albania, the capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration were strengthened on issues such as the

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<sup>28</sup> The national capacities were strengthened with training and advice to enable the implementation of the National Brucellosis Control Programmes (May 2016). While it is taking time to see a reduction in the number of cases, the governments have already shown that they are responding and preparing better (e.g. Georgia). Subregional workshops on brucellosis control were organized in Armenia and Georgia (October 2016). FAO also has a regional roadmap for progressive control covering Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia.

<sup>29</sup> In September 2016, FAO support contributed to deal with two outbreaks of African swine fever in Republic of Moldova in time to prevent further damage. Geographical Information System (GIS) modules were used for surveillance and information monitoring.

<sup>30</sup> Improving Food Safety in Georgia's Dairy Sector; Update of Meat Quality Standards in Montenegro; Public-private policy dialogue on food safety and quality standards in the meat sector in Serbia; and Meat and dairy policies in Albania. Additionally, the implementation of Chemical Products Regulations in the Russian Federation and Serbia was supported. Finally, an Exchange of Lessons Learned in the Western Balkans was organized in April 2016.

implementation of marketing standards, quality policy, organic/geographical indication (May 2016). The use of geographical indication for horticulture products was introduced in Serbia.

49. The project “Seed sector development in Countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization” (GCP/INT/123/MUL) aimed at developing a sustainable, environmentally friendly seed production, supply and trade system. Nevertheless, the analysed evaluations did not provide evidence on the contribution to a new base for regional cooperation and trade in the FTTP countries.

50. Value chain analysis and policy recommendations for export were also delivered through a number of projects (e.g. country assessment of the agri-food sector and six benchmarking studies of food export promotional programmes in Republic of Moldova).<sup>31</sup> A number of public-private platforms were facilitated (e.g. meat, dairy and grain sectors in Ukraine through the partnership with the EBRD; dairy policy in Georgia; etc.) As part of the collaboration with EBRD, support was provided to decision-making related to bioenergy investment in three countries (Egypt, Turkey and Ukraine). Furthermore, several projects in the region contributed to greening value chains (e.g. DPI project on Improving the Efficiency of Fruit and Vegetable Value Chains in Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan).

**Finding 3. Contribution of FAO support to enhance food security and nutrition in the region: Results were concentrated in policy work, production of data and evidence<sup>32</sup> and global advocacy.<sup>33</sup> There was less progress on strengthening regional and country-level capacities. The lack of a clear, enforced corporate accountability framework hampered mainstreaming and reporting on nutrition. In this sense, there was broad consensus in the region that mainstreaming these dimensions through the RIs should be strengthened.**

51. Food security and nutrition are still areas of concern in the region despite the important improvements during recent years (see Section 2.1). The ERC underscored the overarching objective of eliminating hunger and malnutrition in all its forms and noted the importance of interregional collaboration to global food security and nutrition.

52. Addressing the root causes of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition requires that a number of elements be in place, including: political commitment; common understanding of problems and solutions based on sound data, information and analysis; inclusive governance mechanisms and stakeholder coordination; a coherent framework of policies, programmes and investments; leveraging food and agricultural systems for better nutrition; addressing the gender gap; etc. These elements constitute the pillars of the SO 1 programme.

53. Although not specifically for ECA-region, the Nutrition Evaluation (2018–2019) concluded that FAO’s involvement in nutrition-sensitive agriculture (initially) and food systems for nutrition (later) has grown significantly and evolved qualitatively. FAO has the mandate and reach, technical strengths and standing with partners to take a leadership role in this domain. Nevertheless, the *Strategy and Vision for FAO’s Work in Nutrition*<sup>34</sup> lacked an accountability framework and a dedicated corporate resource-

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<sup>31</sup> After completion of the studies, over 120 fruit producers, traders, retailers and market experts from all regions of Republic of Moldova, as well as representatives of supermarket chains and fruit importers from Belarus, Romania, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine gathered for the First International Conference on Fresh Produce Retailing and Exports in Republic of Moldova (November 2016).

<sup>32</sup> For example, the annual flagship publications related to the Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition are key documents regarding the highlighting of data and evidence.

<sup>33</sup> For example, the work related to CAPNUTRA and the Central Asia Platform on nutrition. The Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform (Central Asia and Caucasus) with the support of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), WHO, FAO and World Food Programme (WFP) regional offices, has organized a three-day symposium on sustainable food systems for children’s healthy diets. Further information available at: <http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/1191376/>.

<sup>34</sup> Strategy and vision for FAO’s work in nutrition (2012), available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/me902e/me902e.pdf>.

mobilization instrument. As a consequence, mainstreaming and reporting on nutrition does not feature prominently in the ECA-region portfolio.

54. In general, there was very limited coverage of nutrition-related issues in the SO evaluations. This was particularly true for ECA-region where there was also broad consensus that mainstreaming these dimensions through the RIs should be strengthened. FAO's work has focused so far on policy advice and global advocacy. There was little evidence of concrete results on strengthening regional and country-level capacities and on the production of data. Nevertheless, there are some examples such as the projects to strengthen the national food security information systems project in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that aimed to increase the use of information on food security and improve related policies. The project<sup>35</sup> was moderately successful in meeting its immediate objectives (i.e. data collection and analysis was significantly changed, and dissemination of qualitative outputs to the various ministries was initiated). At the time of the final evaluation, the project nevertheless lacked in terms of analysing and applying the information to make effective decisions on food security and nutrition. The main reason for this was the weak capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and Melioration of Kyrgyzstan to utilize the information, in addition to the limited duration of the project.

**Finding 4. Contribution of FAO support to promote gender equality in the region: FAO's work has addressed gender through a limited number of specific actions (under the RI1 and much less under RI2) but, despite mainstreaming is compulsory in all FAO's work, it has been rarely done (e.g. specific women needs, priorities and experiences were not considered during project design and implementation).**

55. A number of reports and at least eight Country Gender Assessments were published in ECA-region over 2014-2019.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the FAO's work in the region addressed gender through specific actions to empower rural women and ensure inclusiveness of women and disadvantaged groups in line with the corporate policy requirements<sup>37</sup> and REU's gender strategy approach (mainly under the RI1).

56. This work contributed for example to increase the participation of vulnerable groups in cooperatives (e.g. by training Ministry staff, local authorities and agricultural cooperatives on social inclusion and women's engagement); and to empower over 1 500 rural women through capacity development under a UN joint programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment in Kyrgyzstan. The project "Strengthening national capacities for production and analysis of sex-disaggregated data through the implementation of the FAO Gender and Agriculture Framework" (GCP/SEC/008/TUR) aimed to provide a statistical tool to analyse gender equality in the agricultural sector.

57. Under the RI2, a pilot gender-specific activity supported income diversification and worked with rural women at grassroots level to improve their access to markets (support to rural crafts in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan). The analysed evaluations identified this project as a good example of a specific activity initiated to provide more systematic support to address gender in value chains.

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<sup>35</sup> Final Evaluation of the project National Food Security Information System in Kyrgyzstan (2015). Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bd520e.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Under the FAO Regional Gender Equality Strategy for Europe and Central Asia 2016-2017 approved in January 2016, and in line with the ERC/Europe and Central Asia recommendations, a regional network of experts meeting convened in Minsk in February 2016, which resulted in the publication of Gender, Social Protection and Rural Development. FAO published a report on the state of social protection in the region of Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia and an awareness-raising meeting was prepared to define FAO's role in social protection in the region. The Agri-Gender Statistical Toolkit was published in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey; Country Gender Assessments were conducted for Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Four more (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova and Serbia) are underway, to be released in 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Policy on Gender Equality – Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development, FAO (2013), available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3205e.pdf>.



58. On the other hand, the corporate strategy on gender equality also requests that gender is mainstreamed internally in all FAO's work. This means that all FAO work must systematically examine and address women's as well as men's needs, priorities and experiences as part of the development of policies, normative standards, programmes, projects and knowledge building activities, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. Nevertheless, this was rarely done.

59. In the cases in which gender issues were integrated into the design, this was considered unrealistic or the projects appeared to have diverted from this aim. For example, a project on sustainable land management and climate-friendly agriculture implemented in Turkey (see analysis under Finding 5) had unrealistic goals to counter the patriarchal power structure; lacked a clear strategy for women's empowerment (e.g. Farmer Field Schools),<sup>38</sup> and did not gather sex-aggregated data on beneficiaries. Other examples were the projects "Home Based Nursery Development for Improved Food Security and Environmental Protection in Tajikistan" (GCP/TAJ/006/TUR) and the above-mentioned project on food security in Kyrgyzstan which, despite its being foreseen in the design, did not reach women or achieve gender balance (e.g. among project staff, trainers, beneficiaries, etc.) As a result, none of these projects appeared to have had any concrete impact on gender equality.

60. This was in part attributed to the lack of knowledge and capacity among stakeholders at all levels. For example, discussions with stakeholders in the framework of the FTTP final evaluation revealed a large gap in capacity, attitude and knowledge regarding gender equality and how to address it as it was often suggested that there were no gender disparities in ECA-region. This clearly contrasts with the findings of the FAO's study on rural women in ECA-region.<sup>39</sup> This study showed that, although women have important roles in agriculture and livestock production, they are strongly disadvantaged in terms of land tenure security and access to producer associations and services.

**Finding 5. Contribution of FAO support to promote a sustainable management of natural resources and address environmental challenges in the region: FAO's work on climate change has been largely integrated into its programmatic work, elucidating the link between sustainable agriculture and climate-change mitigation and adaptation at the regional and national levels. The establishment of the RI3 is a result of the strong focus required in this area.**

61. Climate change has increasingly been integrated into FAO's programming, especially in the case of SO 2 and SO 5. Although not specifically for the ECA-region, the analysed evaluation found that climate change was well integrated into the design of SO 2 initiatives, delivery mechanisms and normative products.

62. In this framework, the concept of environmental sustainability was built into the design of several projects in the region. However, the analysed evaluations found that the concepts were rarely integrated into practice. For example, the FTTP final evaluation revealed that the concerns focused on the immediate benefits of the projects rather than in strategic solutions for a sustainable use of natural resources and environmental challenges in the region. It was further noticed that, in general, the outputs were not scaled-up or continued due to the limited funding and limited project duration.

63. The emerging funding mechanisms specifically related to climate change such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) have become a major dimension of many FAO interventions in the field. FAO's work has contributed to increase the access of the countries in the region to this funding through, for example, REU's regional strategies for enhanced engagement with GCF and GEF. The "Sustainable Land Management and Climate-Friendly Agriculture" project in Turkey was for example co-funded by the GEF with USD 5.75 million. These and other funding opportunities encouraged the inclusion of climate change in projects and programmes. FAO also provided support and policy analysis for Members to intensify their efforts to plan and implement their

<sup>38</sup> Men and women attended different training sessions. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that the curriculum was the same for both with no emphasis on food security and nutrition for the female cohorts as foreseen by the project's design.

<sup>39</sup> FAO. 2014. *Rural Women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3840e.pdf>.

commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to facilitate their development projections.<sup>40</sup>

64. FAO has pursued a cross-sectoral approach in its portfolio on climate change, spanning forestry, livestock and agriculture (e.g. improved access to climate financing in Kyrgyzstan and North Macedonia). The Organization has managed to operate at multiple levels, from global negotiations to national policies and field activities. In this framework, FAO's work included baseline studies (e.g. Central Asia and Caucasus countries) and a regional strategy for sustainable natural resources management, responsive climate change and disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, FAO has, for example, contributed to enhance capacities on agro-meteorology service, climate change modelling, forecasting systems and damage and loss assessment in agriculture, and promotion of early warning systems, and climate and market information services through regional cooperation and capacity development.

65. The project "Sustainable Land Management and Climate-Friendly Agriculture" (GCP/TUR/055/GFF) aimed to improve agricultural sustainability and forest land use management in Turkey through the diffusion and adoption of low-carbon technologies and practices to reduce wind erosion. It promoted a Farmer Field Schools approach that contributed to increase farmers' willingness to adopt sustainable land management practices according to the mid-term evaluation. The farmers that applied these practices reported net economic benefits. Nevertheless, the mid-term evaluation highlighted that most of the target outputs and outcomes of the project would not be achieved by its expected end date (December 2018) and that the communication budget was not being used effectively.

66. The introduction of a new RI in 2018 provided a programmatic framework to systematically strengthen countries' capacities to achieve sustainable resources management including adaptation and mitigation to climate change and disaster risk reduction in agriculture, forestry and fishery. The support is provided through three components and seven areas of work that contribute to the achievement of several SDGs.

## III.2 Emerging issues and gaps

*3.2.1 Evidence on a number of weaknesses in design were found, including the lack of robust theories of change. This resulted in a limited promotion of synergies and insufficient collaboration among projects.*

67. It was in general difficult for the evaluations to find credible evidence of outcomes and lasting results that could be credibly attributed to FAO's work. For example, the FTTP evaluation did not find credible evidence of lasting results and concrete examples of improvement of food security and poverty reduction among project-recipient groups or communities.

68. This was partly a consequence of the projects being too scattered, small and of short duration to produce real impact, and partly because the projects did not work with implementation partners that fulfilled project activities at the field level (see the analysis under Finding 1). It was for example highlighted that (despite obvious links) the FTTP projects were not successful at collaborating either among themselves<sup>41</sup> or with other projects outside the FTTP.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For example, through the report "Policy analysis of nationally determined contributions in Europe and Central Asia" available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2684EN/ca2684en.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Although the issues of feeding and genetics are closely related in livestock production, there was no cooperation between the projects GCP/SEC/001/TUR "Cattle production improvement in Central Asia countries" and GCP/SEC/003/TUR "Promoting the management of animal genetic resources in SEC countries". The same was found by the FTTP evaluation for all projects dealing with issues of crop and seed production.

<sup>42</sup> For example, the results of the project "Capacity Building for Sustainable Management of Mountain Watersheds in Central Asia and the Caucasus" (GCP/SEC/002/TUR) could have been linked with the pasture management programmes implemented by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The project "Protection and Cultivation of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in West

69. In the same vein, the lack of robust Theories of Change (e.g. FTTP, project on sustainable land management and climate-friendly agriculture in Turkey, etc.) as well as a clear, enforced accountability framework both at regional and organizational level (e.g. nutrition) hampered reporting and achievement of high-impact outcomes.

*3.2.2. Evidence on the limited capacities of FAO offices (at country, regional and subregional level) and uncondusive procedures (including long delays to approve some projects) were found. This resulted in some duplication, limited ownership and weak monitoring and evaluation at both country and regional level.*

70. The lack of robust theories of change together with the limited capacities in REU, SEC and country offices resulted in a weak monitoring and evaluation framework and little progress on strengthening regional and country-level capacities and on the production of data and evidence.

71. There were also concerns related to FAO's limited capacity to adequately respond to country demands and effectively promote cross-disciplinary activities and address emerging issues (e.g. inadequate expertise in country offices to promote and formulate value-chain and food-systems approaches and to engage in agriculture and trade policy-coherence dialogue).

72. The lean structure of country offices meant they relied heavily on REU and SEC for technical backstopping, even though these offices also faced capacity and resource constraints (e.g. limited regional and subregional office capacity and expertise to provide technical backstopping for the wide range of SO themes, disaster risk reduction and management, insurance and cash-based approaches, conflict and political analysis, etc.)<sup>43</sup> Child labour in the cotton industry was mentioned as a particularly important concern that should be addressed (e.g. in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan).

73. Furthermore, the need to strengthen REU's coordination role has been identified as the evaluations showed evidence of similar activities being funded under different mechanisms in the same country (e.g. RIs and TCPs).

74. As a consequence of the long delays to approve some projects, the context changed, and the countries lost interest. For example, Azerbaijan did not sign the project on pesticides and pest management in Central Asia (GCP/RER/035/TUR) since, by the time the project became operational, the main output of the project (conduct an inventory of obsolete pesticides) had already been delivered by another project. Weak ownership was also identified in several cases (e.g. the same project in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan).

*3.2.2. Project implementation was jeopardized by the limited capacity of counterpart institutions but also by the lack of consistency and understanding among countries and stakeholders.*

75. The implementation of many projects has been challenging (often due to nascent institutions and funding constraints). The effectiveness of FAO's work was hampered by the insufficient financial

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Mediterranean Region in Turkey" (UTF/TUR/058/TUR) failed to involve extension organizations or a non-governmental organization (NGO) with a good network to the mountain farmers. The project "Development of organic agriculture and institutional capacity building in Azerbaijan" (GCP/AZE/006/TUR) did not consult the existing experience with organic agriculture that could have been provided by Ganja Agribusiness Association (a national NGO that was a pioneer in organic agriculture).

<sup>43</sup> In this framework, it has been noted that REU and the SEC resources were strained, and it would be difficult to meet increasing needs to undertake rapid assessments for food safety risks and the work on transboundary animal disease control.

and human resources of counterpart institutions, lack of clarity in relation to the boundaries of their competencies, absorption capacity of the assistance received from different development partners, etc.

76. Lack of consistency and understanding among countries and stakeholders also posed difficulties for several projects. For example, the focus of a project on animal genetics was understood to be conservation and protection of indigenous livestock breeds in Turkey; whereas it was understood as improving productivity of the local livestock population, including crossbreeding with highly productive breeds in other countries. The project on seed development was another valid example as its focus was understood in Turkey as facilitating regional seed trade; while the other countries were more interested in developing their local seed markets. As a result, the basic idea behind the FTTP projects (i.e. coherent actions and partnerships) was often lost.

77. The lack of authoritative and common definitions (e.g. food systems approaches) added to uncertainty for stakeholders and the understanding of concepts varied from one country to another. In this framework, there was evidence of FAO's contributions to evidence-based policy formulation. However, the translation of policy into action and the scalability of FAO's field pilots were not automatic due in part to the experimental nature of a considerable part of this work and also to the scarce resources available.

*3.2.4. Evidence on the limitations in terms of impact and sustainability were also found. This was mainly due to the lack of exit strategies, insufficient reach of beneficiaries (e.g. number or type) and limited ownership.*

78. Capacity was increased in many of the implementing institutions and new knowledge and skills were developed among the participants. While there are indications that the knowledge obtained will be used in their work, such as in negotiations, formulation of ministry plans and policies, etc., the sustainability elements related to training could have been better designed (e.g. on WTO and the Agricultural Trade Policy Expert Network). The small number of people (mainly at the level of government officials and scientists) due to very limited resources of voluntary contributions in the region and the fact that beneficiaries were rarely targeted was a limiting factor. Lack of ownership by the national counterparts also limited the effectiveness of FAO's contributions to develop draft policies or strategic plans. Similarly, the FAO support at policy or strategic level on food security and nutrition was not translated into concrete projects or programmes.

79. Most of the evaluations expressed sustainability-related concerns in terms of the ability of the state bodies to effectively implement the recommendations (e.g. on food safety). In this sense, none of the projects examined by the FTTP final evaluation had an exit strategy. The mid-term evaluation of the project on sustainable land management and climate-friendly agriculture implemented in Turkey also highlighted that it had neither a formal sustainability strategy nor an exit plan. Often, sustainability was described in general terms and follow-up projects were hoped for. Knowledge products were broadly appreciated by beneficiaries but the awareness about these publications among other stakeholders remained rather low (e.g. Ministries of Economy, Trade, etc.) Despite FAO's contributions, more could have been done to facilitate cross-learning and spreading the knowledge across the region (e.g. learning from DPI and EBRD work was not well integrated into FAO's sustainable food value chain network/platform).

*3.2.5. A number of emerging issues were identified, including some related to the localization of the SDG indicators, export promotion and diversification, food systems, RIs linkages, animal production value chain, etc.*

80. The countries in the region have already localized the SDG indicators. The need for assistance to develop programmes to address them was identified by the evaluations. REU has already taken strong

measures (more than ten TCP Facility projects) to address this issue at country level and through programme integration into the three RIs. Other emerging issues such as urbanization, decentralization, migration, etc. were considered to deserve greater attention in the theory of change of the SOs and at country level. Neither the export promotion nor the export diversification strategies were well defined yet but a speeded-up process of identification of the modalities of support was expected soon.

81. Similarly, FAO's work has contributed to an improved environment for global trade but the link to food systems has not been made evident. This was due to certain weaknesses of the theory of change of the SOs, as well as the fact that the concept of agricultural and food systems is not yet well internalized across the Organization. Intra-component linkages within the RIs (e.g. food safety-value chain and value chain-trade policy linkages) as well as linkages between RIs (e.g. value chain development) could have been stronger and better elaborated.

82. Work on the livestock sector (and the work on food safety frameworks overall) needed prolonged engagement as evidenced by the successful example of a ten-year long engagement in Serbia (covering production, performance recording, breed improvement and market development). In this sense, animal production value chain development did not feature prominently in the portfolio. Pilot work on the ground (in partnership with specialized agencies) could generate evidence to feed into policy advice. In general, there was increasing scope for FAO engagement in the meat sector value chains.

*3.2.6. Evidence was found on the limited implementation of both the corporate's partnership and gender strategies.*

83. FAO has achieved positive results by engaging with development partners such as EBRD and the European Union, but cooperation with other development partners active in the region has been scarce, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or the International Finance Corporation (IFC). FAO has also made efforts to strengthen partnerships with the civil society and the private sector, including for example the work to increase SDG awareness in Armenia.<sup>44</sup>

84. Improving gender disparity was only recently introduced in the CPFs and the focus needs to be strengthened. A robust identification of gaps that could be addressed programmatically and/or at project level needs to be supported across the region. The gender assessments undertaken in several countries (e.g. Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan) were a clear step forward in this direction. It was highlighted that gender issues pertaining specifically to agri-food trade in the region could have been better supported with studies and activities.

### **III.3 Lessons learned**

85. FAO is an excellence-driven organization with a strong record and reputation in the region. Its involvement has the potential to bring about significant efficiency gains by catalysing dialogue, facilitating access to cutting-edge knowledge and attracting additional contributions into the projects (in-kind or others). In line with its mandate, FAO plays a crucial role in promoting and facilitating multilateral dialogue, knowledge sharing and networking at the regional level, and works together to promote intra- and interregional cooperation. The RIs are a good basis to facilitate the cross-sectoral dialogue as well as linking up with external processes. However, the theory of change would need to be further sharpened.

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<sup>44</sup> Available at: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/fsn-caucasus-asia/news/news-detail/en/c/1161492/>.

86. A multidimensional project design and approach fosters state institutions as well as civil society engagement contributing to increase the sustainability of results. As a result of the high engagement of Ministries' staff in the development of policy documents, full ownership of the strategies and action plans was ensured, which was a good precondition for the sustainability of results during and post-implementation.

87. FAO's relationship with both the government and civil society is deemed to be an important determinant of the quality of its support (e.g. VGGT). One approach that worked well was to engage diverse public and private sector stakeholders, including farmer and industry representatives, in dialogue over concrete value chain bottlenecks – identifying root problems and putting practical issues on the table (e.g. in the framework of the partnership with the EBRD).

88. Prolonged engagement is needed to increase impact and ensure sustainability as evidenced by the ten-year long engagement in Serbia on the livestock sector covering production, performance recording, breed improvement and market development.

89. The FTTP was a unique concept for collaboration (between Turkey and the Central Asian region) that created good opportunities for partnership development and facilitated the mobilization of expertise that contributed to increase the efficiency of the operations.

90. Bigger impact was achieved when small projects were linked with major interventions (e.g. by creating the required knowledge and awareness to formulate larger programmes) or established networks. For example, based on GCP/RER/035/TUR "Initiative for Pesticides and Pest Management in Central Asia and Turkey", a GEF-funded project has been formulated, GCP/SEC/011/GFF "Lifecycle Management of Pesticides and Disposal of Obsolete Pesticides in Central Asia and Turkey". The UTF/TUR/057/TUR project "National Geospatial Soil Fertility and Soil Organic Carbon Information System" and the Soil Fertilizer and Water Resources Central Research Institute are now linked with the international network on soil. This provides the institutions with important networks that can facilitate access to international project funds such as GEF.

#### IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

**Conclusion 1. FAO's work in the region responded to the countries' development needs and national objectives related to rural poverty reduction and agri-food trade and market integration, natural resource management and climate change. The FAO's comparative advantage was often regarded by key stakeholders as undisputable. Nevertheless, there was an attribution gap due to the lack of a fully consistent and comprehensive accountability framework at regional level. The RIs were a step forward that need to be further improved.**

91. As a result, Governments have increasingly requested relevant support from FAO and other actors in providing essential policy advice, technical support and capacity-building in the development of the legal, normative and institutional frameworks (e.g. for agricultural sector reforms, policy development, rural development and strengthening extension and advisory services to facilitate rehabilitation of rural areas and promoting agriculture).

92. There was evidence that knowledge products had been used by other donor organizations to develop new projects or to improve the provision of the agricultural extension services to the small-scale farmers. Despite the constraints, partners appreciated FAO's efforts at transforming and engaging in new areas, with specific mentions of rural employment, social protection and country gender assessments.

93. Nevertheless, the lack of a consistent and comprehensive accountability framework at project level, made it difficult to find credible evidence of outcomes and lasting results that could be credibly

attributed to FAO's work. The programmatic approach within the RIs is supporting the development of such a framework.

94. To facilitate results-based management, FAO should systematically develop a more comprehensive theory of change at the project design phase that better explains the causality chain to achieve the objectives and results. The theory of change should identify intermediate effects and assumptions that are not necessarily under the control of the project. The pragmatic approach of the RIs, seems a step forward in this direction as well as to enable a steady pace of delivery and avert discontinuities.

**Recommendation 1. Improve the existing accountability framework at regional and thematic level making it fully comprehensive and consistent, ensuring that all projects are based on a robust theory of change.**

**Conclusion 2. Reduced capacities both at country and regional level limited the effectiveness of FAO's work in the region. In particular, implementing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system at country and regional level.**

95. Monitoring and evaluation was in general rather weak. This was in part attributed to the limited capacities of FAO in the countries (with many countries not having a fully-fledged representation) which made it difficult to delegate project implementation to them. REU and SEC also faced capacity and resource constraints which complicated technical backstopping and coordination. The ERC has recognized the need to review FAO's global coverage to direct more effective support to Members by enhancing the capacity of decentralized locations while maintaining the technical capacity at FAO headquarters.

96. The lack of a monitoring and evaluation system at country and regional level made it difficult to find credible evidence of outcomes and lasting results that could be attributed to FAO's work. Although they need to be strengthened by developing comprehensive theories of change as the basis for these systems, the pragmatic approach of the RIs seems a step forward in this direction.

97. FAO should enhance its results-based management culture for effective evaluation and results management at regional and national level. It should strengthen the learning focus by regularly assessing project evaluability, implementing results-oriented monitoring and/or mid-term evaluations and organizing structured learning events. This should be accompanied by providing ongoing training to managers and staff in the various aspects of results management, including self-evaluation.

**Recommendation 2. Implement a consistent and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system both at national and regional level. Strengthen the regional and subregional offices' capacities to provide backstopping support to FAO country offices in project formulation and resource prospecting.**

**Conclusion 3. Achieving major impacts from FAO interventions largely depended on policy uptake and investment mobilization. This typically involves robust exit strategies and strong partnerships.**

98. FAO's potential to have a major impact at SO level is constrained by the current scale and duration of its interventions, its limited control over policy implementation outcomes, and inadequate extrabudgetary support for certain key themes. More notable results were achieved when there was a strong programmatic connection and coordination with the Technical Cooperation Programmes and DPI (e.g. investment supported by DPI in several regions, including years of policy dialogue, sectoral-platform and institutional-support work in Ukraine, which was later replicated in Serbia's meat and dairy industries).

99. In this framework, an important key to success of FAO's work were the strong partnerships based on existing frameworks such as the Memorandum of Understanding providing for a 70/30 funding split with the EBRD. Partnerships with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) were also instrumental in FAO's work related to food safety.

100. FAO's work has made contributions at policy level and within pilot scalable initiatives. Nevertheless, more is needed to translate this into investment programmes. The lack of robust exit strategies in many projects resulted in a limited awareness among stakeholders beyond direct beneficiaries and prevented cross-learning and spreading the knowledge across the region (e.g. knowledge on publications remained rather low on many occasions). Project management should elaborate an "exit strategy" at project outset and/or during its implementation in order to maximize the project's sustainability. It should include targeted activities such as organizing wrap-up sessions to tie in all the themes addressed and possibly agree on specific commitments for the future. These exit strategies should capitalize on FAO's technical expertise in highly valued areas to engage with strategic partners such as the European Union, IFC, ADB and others.

**Recommendation 3. Ensure that all projects include a robust exit strategy shifting the attention to strengthening institutions as well as facilitating cross-learning, spreading the knowledge across the region and capitalize on FAO's technical expertise to engage with strategic partners.**

**Conclusion 4. The lack of knowledge and capacity within FAO and among stakeholders prevented gender equality concerns to be systematically addressed in FAO's interventions in the region.**

101. Although gender mainstreaming is compulsory in all FAO's work, gender analysis and mainstreaming of gender concerns do not take place in a systematic and consistent manner, across all thematic areas and throughout all the programming cycle, to ensure that women's specific needs, priorities and experiences are adequately addressed. Nevertheless, some specific measures have already been introduced in the new CPFs, capacity building of FAO and ministerial staff is taking place, and a number of country gender assessments have been undertaken.

**Recommendation 4. Continue to develop knowledge and capacity (both within FAO and among stakeholders) on gender mainstreaming to ensure that gender issues are addressed by (all) FAO's work in the region (e.g. systematic gender analysis conducted throughout the programme and project cycle).**



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## Appendix 1. Conceptual framework of the Regional Initiatives and SDG localization

1. FAO's work to reduce rural poverty in ECA-region is mainly channelled through the two components of the RI1 that address a total of 12 areas.

**Table 3: RI1's conceptual framework**

Components	Areas
Support policy development and innovative practices for increased sustainable agricultural production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting innovative and sustainable production technologies.</li> <li>• Good agricultural practices including integrated pest management, organic production and conservation of plant genetic resources.</li> <li>• Capacity development of farmers including through farmer field schools.</li> <li>• Policy development for increased sustainable agricultural production.</li> <li>• Enhanced access to natural resources including land, water, forest.</li> </ul>
Support improvement of rural livelihood and enhanced access to natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT).</li> <li>• Support to land consolidation, regulation of agricultural land markets and management and privatization of state-owned agricultural land.</li> <li>• Transforming rural institutions including through enhanced and participatory extension service and e-services.</li> <li>• Rural development policy (e.g. strategies and programmes).</li> <li>• Integrated community development.</li> <li>• Work on migration including addressing the root causes.</li> <li>• Improved access to (short) value chain.</li> </ul>

2. FAO's work under the RI1 has mainly contributed to SDG 1 (targets 1.4 and 1.b by supporting the implementation of the VGGT and the promotion of national land consolidation programmes) and SDG 2 (targets 2.3 and 2.4 through support for the adoption of best practices to improve the competitiveness of smallholder farms) but also to SDG 5 (target 5.A), SDG 8 (target 8.6) and to some extent SDG 10. This was achieved by aligning the work to SO 2 and SO 3, as well as SO 1 and SO 4:

- i. To increase capacities of farmers on sustainable agricultural production by enhancing their access to services such as farmer field schools or extension services (output 3.1) so that they can acquire good agricultural practices in such areas as forestry, fisheries and livestock production while increasing adaptation and resilience to climate change (outputs 2.1 and 2.2).

- ii. To ensure inclusive growth through improved rural livelihoods, with emphasis on gender equality and economic empowerment. The initiative supported multisectoral rural development policies, the development of community and short value chains, statistics, and the implementation of the VGGT, including addressing land fragmentation through land consolidation instruments (output 3.1).

3. FAO's work to strengthen agri-food trade and market integration in ECA-region is mainly channelled through the three components of the RI2 that address a total of ten areas.

**Table 4: RI2's conceptual framework**

Components	Areas
Trade agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WTO agreements and other market integration agreements</li> </ul>
Global standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phytosanitary</li> <li>• Food safety standards</li> <li>• Best practices</li> <li>• Sanitary/veterinary control issues Improved access to (short) value chain</li> </ul>
Promoting access to markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Export diversification</li> <li>• Value chains</li> <li>• Food loss and waste</li> <li>• Outbound trade promotion</li> <li>• Geographical indications, organic production and quality branding</li> <li>• Promote access to domestic and export market</li> </ul>

4. The three components and technical areas encompass activities with trade and markets as the connecting theme that mainly contribute to SDG 2 (target 2.b.2 by developing capacities of governments and private sector in WTO instruments and promoting transparent markets to correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets), SDG 8 (target 8.a.1 by developing capacities of governments and private sector to increase Aid for Trade support) and SDG 12 (target 12.3 by supporting the development of national strategies to reduce food losses and waste, as well as strengthening the official food control system). The RI2 also contributes more indirectly to SDG 15 on life on land and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals.

5. In this framework, the work under the RI2 has primarily aligned with SO 4 but also with SO 1, SO 2, SO 3 and to a limited extent to SO 5:

- i. To enhance the capacities of countries that are negotiating WTO accession or have recently acceded and are in the process of implementing their commitments by (i) training civil servants, agri-food business representatives and national experts who contribute to trade policy formulation on global trade issues, including market access, domestic support measures, technical barriers to trade, trade dispute resolution, trade facilitation and

transparency; and (ii) supporting the Agricultural Trade Expert Network as a forum for dialogue on trade policies and strategies through the organization of high-level workshops, round tables and conferences (output 4.1).

- ii. Addressing plant health issues through (i) support to the Regional Plant Protection Organization and National Plant Protection Organizations in the implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC); (ii) strengthening animal health by building capacities in veterinary services, to revise and harmonize countries' related legislation, preventing and controlling transboundary animal diseases and support establishing National Animal Identification and Traceability Systems; increasing capacities to address the threat of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR); (iii) strengthening the capacity of regional bodies in biosafety and strengthening related networks for compliance with WTO agreements; and (iv) supporting the development of robust official food control systems, and supporting the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe to ensure an inclusive and participatory food safety policy dialogue (output 4.2).
- iii. To promote an improved policy environment for trade promotion and diversification by providing (i) assistance in the preparation of export promotion strategies at national level and campaigns in reaching new markets for food products; (ii) value chain analysis offering insight into the operations of specific marketing channels by assessing the constraints to growth for domestic and export markets and providing solutions to develop more efficient, inclusive and sustainable agri-food value chains; (iii) promotion of geographical indications and organic production to develop sustainable value chains, to be strategically placed in the national agricultural policies to foster sustainable rural development, increase trade opportunities, quality of food and diversification of the on/off farm income opportunities for the communities in rural areas; and (iv) promoting good practices and continued high-level and expert dialogue combined with capacity development of civil servants and national experts (output 4.3).
- iv. To support decision-makers, agricultural producers and researchers through (i) analytical or synthesis reports providing evidence on agri-food trade; (ii) capacity development of civil servants in the application of actual methods of analysis of the impacts of trade, food, and agriculture policies and in designing strategies for national agrifood systems development (output 4.4).

6. The introduction of a new RI in 2018 provided a programmatic framework to systematically strengthen countries' capacities to achieve sustainable resources management including adaptation and mitigation to climate change and disaster risk reduction in agriculture, forestry and fishery (RI3). The support is provided through three components and seven areas of work.

**Table 5: RI3's conceptual framework**

Components	Areas
Improved policy alignment, coordination and cooperation. for sustainable use of natural resources, climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate cross-sector policy dialogue to develop more integrated strategies.</li> <li>• Improved capacities on risk and crisis management, sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.</li> </ul>

<p>Effective provision/collection of data, tools and services for effective decision-making on addressing natural resource management, climate change and disaster risk reduction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened capacities in statistics and analysis for implementation and monitoring of the SDG indicators under FAO custodianship.</li> <li>• Improved agro-meteorology services, early warning, hazard mapping, and climate change modelling.</li> </ul>
<p>Capacity development for sustainable natural resource management and climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened capacities to formulate policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks (e.g. sustainable water and land management and climate-resilient and sustainable food systems).</li> <li>• Improved access to climate and environmental financing (e.g. GCF and GEF).</li> <li>• Improved capacity for emergency preparedness to reduce the impact of disasters and crises.</li> </ul>

7. The three components and technical areas contribute to SDG 12 (by strengthening national capacities on prevention and mitigation practices, non-structural vulnerability, sustainable consumption and production) and SDG 13 as well as to SDG 2 (by supporting more productive and sustainable agriculture), SDG 6 (by supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation through strengthening resilience, adaptation to natural disasters, increasing water efficiency, policy integration and improved education and capacity building), SDG 14 (on oceans and seas) and SDG 15 (on life on land through sustainable use and restoration of ecosystems, forest management, and combat desertification and restore degraded land and soil).

8. In this framework, the work under the RI3 primarily aligns with SO 2 and SO 5 but also to SOs 1, 3 and 4:

- i. To improve governments' and stakeholders' capacities and to support knowledge generation and advocacy strengthening for more integrated and cross-sectoral practices (SO 2.1). Piloting, testing or scaling-up practices to strengthen the national capacities to implement, monitor and evaluate policies and international instruments, programmes and legislation that foster sustainable production and address climate change and environmental degradation (SO 2.1 and SO 2.3). To support policy and programme formulation, aimed at strengthening sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and addressing climate change and environmental degradation as well as improved capacities to facilitate cross-sectorial policy dialogue to develop more integrated strategies (SO 2.2). Support, including awareness raising and capacity development, to ensure effective integration of agriculture, forestry and fisheries into international governance mechanisms, especially in relation to the 2030 Agenda (SO 2.3). To improve the capacities (technical and managerial) of governments and stakeholders to collect, analyse and report data for decision-making (SO 2.4 and SO 4.3). To improve the assessment and monitoring capacities of all prospects of food security, including greenhouse gas emissions for the agricultural sector, and the development of strategic knowledge products (SO 2.4).
- ii. To strengthen capacities of governments and public organizations to formulate and promote risk reduction and crisis management policies, strategies, plans and investment programmes (SO 5.1). To improve coordination and resource mobilization for risk reduction and crisis management contributing to an enabling environment (legislation, incentives, services, etc.) to ensure sustainable and climate-resilient transitions and strengthening national, regional and international collaboration and knowledge exchange to address priorities,

e.g. transboundary pests and diseases and other threats to production systems caused by climate change (SO 5.1). To improve the capacities (technical and managerial) of governments and stakeholders to set up or improve mechanisms to identify and monitor threats and shocks (including climate and natural factors and market/economic factors), assess risks and deliver integrated and timely early warning on food security (SO 5.2). To upscale prevention and mitigation practices that reduce the impacts of threats and crises as well as support context-specific analysis and institutionalization processes of non-structural vulnerability reduction practices and measures such as risk transfer (SO 5.3). To improve national capacity for emergency preparedness to reduce the impact of disasters and crises (SO 5.4).

- iii. To improve governments' and stakeholders' capacities and to support knowledge generation and advocacy strengthening for enhancing synergies amongst social protection, nutrition, agriculture and natural resources management, including climate change (SO 3.3).
- iv. To strengthen the capacities of government, communities and other key stakeholders to implement policies, strategies, regulatory frameworks and investment plans supportive of inclusive and efficient agri-food systems (SO 4.2).
- v. Piloting, testing or scaling-up practices to strengthen the national capacities to implement, monitor and evaluate policies and international instruments, programmes and legislation that foster sustainable production and address climate change and environmental degradation and their contribution to hunger eradication, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition (SO 1.3).