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والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
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the
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Organisation
des
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pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

COUNCIL

Hundred and Thirty-fifth Session

Rome, 17 – 18 November 2008

Report of the Hundredth Session of the Programme Committee
Rome, 6 – 10 October 2008

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Matters requiring attention by the Council

Matters requiring discussion and/or decision

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REPORT OF THE HUNDREDTH SESSION OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

6 – 10 October 2008

Introduction

1. The Committee submits to the Council the following report of its Hundredth Session.
2. The Chairperson informed the Committee that Mr Kazumasa Shioya had been designated to replace Mr Seiichi Yokoi as the representative of Japan and that Mr Renato Mosca was attending on behalf of Amb. de Carvalho of Brazil. A summary of the qualifications of Messrs Shioya and Mosca are given in the addenda to this report¹.
3. The following Members were present:

Chairperson: Mr V. Heard (United Kingdom)
Vice-Chairperson: Mr R. Parasuram (India)
Members: Mr A.R. Ayazi (Afghanistan)
Mr C.A. Amaral (Angola)
Ms M. del Carmen Squeff (Argentina)
Ms F. Bartlett (Australia)
Mr. R. Mosca (Brazil)
Mr J. Melanson (Canada)
Mr A.A.M. Hosni Abdel Aziz (Egypt)
H.E. P. Bacale Mbiang (Equatorial Guinea)
Mr K. Shioya (Japan)

Item 1: Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable²

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

Item 2: Examination of the Draft Elements of a Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan

5. As requested by the Conference Committee on Follow-up to the IEE, the Committee addressed the section on “Priorities and Programmes of the Organization – Summary Elements of the Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan”, to be included in the Immediate Plan of Action for consideration by the Special Session of the Conference in November 2008. The Committee welcomed the succinct presentation made at the start of its discussion of the basic features of the new results-based model inherent in the proposed elements. It felt that a suitably adapted version of this presentation, expanded to include the other components of the IPA, could constitute a good communication tool.
6. The Committee recalled that the new results-based model had already been broadly endorsed by Members. It underlined that, if properly implemented and backed up by adequate resources, this represented a major step forward to support effective planning and budgeting arrangements in FAO, including greater accountability. The Committee recognised that the planning and *ex post facto* monitoring documents associated with the new processes would be of considerably different scope and format than those issued hitherto. The modified documentation

¹ CL 135/5 Add. 1; CL 135/5 Add. 2

² PC 100/1; PC 100/INF/1

would imply in particular discussion by all the concerned Bodies of outcomes and impacts, rather than the current emphasis on inputs and outputs. In this context, the Committee envisaged that it would have a key role in assessing the merits of management's proposals for Organizational Results, including related targets and indicators of outcomes.

7. The Committee noted that the transition from the 118 technical programme entities in the PWB 2008-09 to the proposed 49 organizational results for substantive activities as presently formulated in the draft elements of the Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan, offered a potential for increased focus and would assist in stimulating more interdisciplinary approaches and cooperation within the Organization. Focus, integration, and overcoming past "silo" approaches in the Organization were not yet guaranteed and would need to be further pursued in the way that organizational results were elaborated. The Committee confirmed that this effort at greater integration was essential for FAO to be able to respond to complex needs and expectations of the membership, for example those relating to rural development or climate change.

8. In recognising the centrality to the IPA of the new Strategic Framework and associated results-based approach to programming, the Committee stressed that effective implementation of the approach would depend also on such aspects as: financial resources; human resource policies and practices; performance management; and the necessary adaptation of the field office structure of the Organization. In respect of the latter, the Committee felt that the skills mix in field offices at all levels would need to be reviewed in light of the strategic objectives and core functions (and this was later demonstrated in the evaluation of the statistics programme which noted a lack of field expertise in this area). Decentralized offices and headquarters would work more closely together, while capitalising on the benefits of improved reporting lines. It recognised that the functioning of the field office structure, including necessary adjustment to the new results-based culture, would need to be continuously monitored by governing bodies.

9. The Committee noted that prioritisation was becoming more and more essential in FAO's work and that this would continue to be the case regardless of the level of resources available. Prioritisation would therefore constitute a major area of attention by both Members and management in the coming year, as well as in future biennial periods. The Committee noted that the new programme planning arrangements to be put in place included changes in the relationships between various FAO governance entities, and that a process leading to improved prioritisation would necessarily involve breaking new ground, as well as iterative learning. In addressing the timeline resulting from the new cycle of governance meetings, including those of the technical committees and regional conferences, which were expected to provide advice on priorities, the Committee recognised that the year 2009 would be exceptional for preparing the Strategic Framework, Medium Term Plan 2010-13, and Programme of Work and Budget 2010-11. It noted that a more complete process could only materialise as intended from 2010 onwards.

10. The Committee engaged in a preliminary discussion about how the process of prioritisation might be approached within the new results-based framework. It was agreed that, while the Committee could initiate the process, the assistance of management would be required for the necessary supportive technical information and analysis. A joint approach was therefore called for. The Committee stressed that the Technical Committees of the Council were well placed to offer advice on prioritisation within their technical fields, although they may have tended not to undertake clear prioritisation in the past. They were in any event not mandated to recommend relative priorities across different areas of competence.

11. The Committee recommended that management facilitate pertinent advice being obtained from the Technical Committees, by providing drafts of the results framework, in the format agreed in the IPA, for the Strategic Objectives most relevant to each Technical Committee. The drafts should set out proposed areas of work contributing to the Organizational Results, based on an analysis of Members' needs (which would be assisted *inter alia* by the increasing availability of National Medium-term Priority Frameworks), combined with a structured analysis of the application of the Organization's strengths as embodied in the Core Functions, as well as such

considerations as organizational performance, existing technical capacity including for cross-disciplinarity, and alternative sources of supply and partnerships.

12. Regarding cross-cutting Strategic Objectives such as those dealing with natural resources, investment, and gender, where there was no clearly associated advice from the Technical Committee, management should provide similar analyses of organizational results and priorities to all Committees for advice.

13. The Programme Committee would then work closely with management to develop, for the Strategic Objectives, a prioritised results framework taking into account the recommendations from the Technical Committees and also those from the cycle of Regional Conferences.

14. The Committee recognised that this had to be seen as an iterative process and one likely to be sensitive. However, this was in keeping with the enhanced role of the Programme Committee as envisaged in the IPA, including making clear recommendations on prioritisation to the Council.

Item 3: Evaluation

A) INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF FAO'S ROLE AND WORK IN STATISTICS³

15. The Committee complimented the Evaluation Team for the high quality of the report. The evaluation focused on two linked issues: the depletion of FAO's capacity in all aspects of statistics and the colossal and increasing needs in developing countries in their own statistical capacity. It found it very useful and timely for providing sound justification in treating statistics as one core function of FAO and an impact focus area as envisaged in FAO's new results-based framework. The Committee recognised that the assessment made of statistics and FAO's related work gave rise to concern. In this respect, the evaluation provided an opportunity to significantly improve the Organization's work in this important area which is clearly under-resourced.

16. The Committee noted that management broadly agreed with all recommendations from the evaluation team, except four where management had alternative suggestions for implementation.

17. The Committee stressed the need for an FAO strategy on its work in statistics that would set priorities. As the evaluation had recommended, taking into account resource constraints for the Organization as a whole, FAO should seek to increase resources for priority activities in three ways: i) reallocation within the statistics division according to the new strategy; ii) an increased allocation to statistics within the Regular Budget; and iii) extrabudgetary funding through for example an IFA. The Committee agreed with the recommendation to restore FAO's capacity in statistics. The Committee noted with concern that extrabudgetary support was inadequate. The Committee fully supported the evaluation's recommendation to shift and give priority focus towards greater support in countries through capacity building and improved communication. However, the Committee emphasised that, given the task ahead, FAO could not act alone and it should seek partnerships, in particular with governments themselves or the pertinent government institutions and multilateral organizations. Recognising that strengthening statistics was a joint undertaking, the Committee stressed that FAO could only play a catalytic role in capacity building at country level while advocating for increased resources and investment.

18. Finally, the Committee was supportive of the recommended organizational arrangements intended to improve coordination within the Organization of its work on statistics, creating streamlined and efficient mechanisms. It noted that the current skills mix in the field structure did not adequately support this core function of the Organization, and this would need to be

³ PC 100/3 A); PC100/3 A) SUP. 1

addressed. It also supported the establishment of a position of Chief Statistician, providing leadership on statistics in the name of the Organization.

B) WORKPLAN FOR EVALUATIONS 2009-10⁴

19. The Committee found that the proposed workplan addressed significant topics and corresponded well to priority programmes contained in the Immediate Plan of Action of the CoC-IEE. The Committee agreed that the workplan would have to be flexible, depending on the level of resources made available. Of the topics proposed for initiation in 2009, Members endorsed:

- a) *Evaluation of capacity building in Africa*, as this was a key function of FAO and the Africa region had the greatest capacity building needs.
- b) *Evaluation of National Medium-term Priority Frameworks*, which had been previously requested by the Programme Committee.
- c) *FAO's work related to water*, as this had been a significant discussion topic in the CoC-IEE.

20. Some Members gave high priority to a Real-time Evaluation of the Initiative on Soaring Food Prices (ISFP) because it could give timely advice on the orientation of the ISFP, while others felt that although the subject matter was important, the evaluation should be postponed until results of work undertaken become more evident.

21. Priority for evaluations to be carried out in 2010 would be given to those referred to in paras. 1 and 2 not carried out in 2009. Of the evaluations proposed to begin in 2010, the Committee assigned highest priority to the evaluation of gender aspects in FAO's work. There was also support for an evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices in the Near East, as this region had not featured prominently in recent evaluation work. Some Members also gave priority to the proposed evaluation of FAO's inter-departmental working mechanisms.

22. The Committee recommended that future workplans should take a three-year perspective and reflect priorities and programmes in the new Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan. In particular, the Committee stated that FAO's work related to climate change adaptation, smallholder agricultural development and governance of the global fisheries commons should be evaluated in future. The Committee also requested to be informed periodically about evaluations that it had requested but were not implemented, along with reasons for not undertaking them.

23. The Committee endorsed continuation of evaluations of FAO's work at country level and wished to receive a synthesis report in 2010 on country evaluations undertaken since the report presented at the 99th session.

24. The Committee noted the planned evaluations of FAO's emergency and rehabilitation activities and requested to receive summaries of these evaluations and the management responses to them for its consideration.

C) CHARTER FOR AN OFFICE OF EVALUATION⁵

25. The Committee noted that the document was a draft of a possible Charter of the FAO Office of Evaluation as called for by the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) of the CoC-IEE. The Committee appreciated the direction taken in the document, aimed at increasing the independence and the quality of the evaluation function. There was support for the dual reporting relationship with the Director-General and the governing bodies as being the most appropriate model to foster both accountability and learning.

⁴ PC 100/3 B

⁵ PC 100/3 C

26. The Committee stressed the need for refining the draft Charter to make it more focused and consistent with the IPA. In addition to the items covered in the present draft, the Charter should clarify the role of evaluation in the new results-based planning model, elaborate the evaluation methodology and define the role of impact evaluations in assessing the effectiveness of the development work of the Organization. The Committee also requested that the independence of the Office of Evaluation be better reflected in the description of the institutional arrangements. In that respect, the process for the selection of the Director of the Office of Evaluation should reflect the text of the IPA approved by the Conference. In addition, it recommended that the governing bodies should be consulted with regard to the termination and/or the renewal of the Director, and that this should be reflected in the Charter.

27. The role of the Evaluation Committee (Internal) should include provision of the necessary quality assurance on management responses and follow-up to evaluations.

28. The Committee agreed that the selection process for the Director should start immediately after the approval of the IPA by the Conference and that the Committee should then meet informally to nominate its representative(s) to participate in the selection process. This decision was preceded by a lengthy discussion of the issues surrounding membership's involvement in the selection of FAO's staff members, but it was concluded that on balance this was the way forward in this case.

29. The Committee asked for a draft Charter to be prepared for review at its next session, taking into account its comments and the approved IPA. The provisions for evaluation as approved in the Charter would be reflected in the Basic Texts of the Organization.

Item 4: UN Joint Inspection Unit Reports

30. There were no JIU Reports submitted to this Session of the Programme Committee.

Item 5: Review of the Working Methods of the Programme Committee

31. The Committee considered how it might need to change its working methods in order to review subsequent programme planning and reporting documents prepared using the new results-based model. The Committee agreed that it would need to shift its emphasis from a consideration of programme inputs, to an examination of results through indicators. The Committee noted that it would need to take into consideration work across all sources of funds, being both Regular Programme and extrabudgetary resources, as well as how it could divide its work with the Finance Committee in reviewing the technical versus administrative programme of work.

32. The Committee felt that, in general, its recommendations could be more constructive, direct and forceful when considering future planning and reporting documents, particularly when assessing programme priorities. The Committee also felt that during its meetings, it would benefit from greater interaction with senior management.

Item 6: Progress Report on the Follow-up to Past Programme Committee Recommendations⁶

33. The Committee took note of the Report.

Item 7: Date and Place of the Hundred and First Session

34. The Committee was informed that Hundredth and First Session of the Programme Committee was scheduled to take place from 11th to 15th May 2009, pending approval by the Conference of the Revised Calendar of Governing Bodies 2008-09.

⁶ PC 100/INF/3

Item 8: Any Other Business

35. There was no discussion under this agenda item.